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THE MINISTRY

TO

THE CONGREGATION

Lectures on Homiletics

BY

JOHN A. KERN, D.D.

PROFESSOR OF PRACTICAL THEOLOGY IN
VANDERBILT UNIVERSITY

"In preaching, the thing of least consequence is the sermon"

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TO MY OLD-TIME FRIEND AND BROTHER

I. W. C.

IN MEMORY OF THE DAYS WHEN IN LIKE-MINDED COMPANIONSHIP WE MADE OUR FIRST ATTEMPTS AT PREPARING TO PREACH THE WORD OF GOD WHICH WE HAD RECEIVED

I INSCRIBE

THIS RESULT OF THOSE AND MANY SIMILAR EFFORTS

DURING THE THIRTY FLEETING YEARS

FROM THEN TILL NOW

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PREFACE

THE following lectures represent the homiletic instruction given during the last ten years in the Biblical Department of Randolph-Macon College.

Every teacher of practical theology is asked for his opinion or advice concerning the choice of books,—an entirely reasonable request, but often hard to comply with. I have tried to do something toward answering such inquiries, by mentioning, at the close of certain lectures, one or more suitable books for reading on the topics discussed. No part of my work has received more careful attention than this apparently easy task.

I had also prepared a series of Questions and Exercises—such as have been used with what seemed to be good results in the class-room—to accompany the treatise. This I afterward decided to leave out. But I cannot refrain from reminding my readers, that to know, even perfectly, the contents of any mere course of instruction, is not to know homiletics. As Simon the son of Gamaliel said of the Law, "Practice, not study, is the principal thing." The several arts embraced in the supreme art of preaching must, like all others, be *done* before they can be truly *known*.

Amid many hesitations and heart-failures, a word of Dr. R. W. Dale to an audience of theological students has brought me no little encouragement. "Some men speak contemptuously," he says, "of lectures on preaching and treatises on the

science and art of rhetoric. For myself I have read scores of books of this kind, and I have never read one without finding in it some useful suggestion. I advise you to read every book on preaching that you can buy or borrow."

These familiar Lectures, with all their defects, contain the best that I have ever known of homiletic thought and Christian experience. My heart goes with them. If they shall prove to be a word fitly spoken to kindle the enthusiasm and rightly direct the energies of any ministerial student or young preacher into whose hands they may fall, one of his older brethren and co-workers will be made exceeding glad.

RANDOLPH-MACON COLLEGE,
September 1, 1897.

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INTRODUCTORY

THE PERSONAL AIM

WE cannot too well remember that what a man does is the expression of what he is. To be is first, both in the order of thought and of fact; then to do. Every act shows some attitude of the soul. Not only the general course of our conduct, but also the special work of our various callings and pursuits, is the inner life taking outward form. This is eminently true of public speaking, and preëminently true of the preaching of the Gospel. The carpenter builds himself into his house, the work of his hands bearing witness either for him or against him. We hear the musician's soul in his music, and read the author's in his book. But the human soul has come into possession of an incomparably fuller and finer art of expression in *speech*. True, the orator speaks a few times and then is silent, while the author writes for the years or the centuries; but no such glowing and penetrative life-forces flow from the pen as are poured forth from the gates of speech so long as these are open. And no speaker is under necessity of declaring the life that is in him so completely as the Christian preacher. He must speak as a good man out of the good treasure of his heart, and may keep back nothing. Knowledge, thought, sensibility, will-power, spiritual experience and character,—in all these must he submit to stand revealed before the congregation, if he would preach not himself, but Christ Jesus the Lord.

Preaching, it is true, when reduced to its simplest terms, is

lifting up the Cross, that sinful men may look and live. But does it matter nothing how this shall be done? If so, write out the message in a few impersonal words, print it along the highways, and the end is gained. Why has the Lord ordained that His disciples' faces and tongues and souls shall declare His Gospel? Human selfishness has no place whatsoever in Christian preaching, but the human self must enter into it wholly.

Homiletics, then, is more than the theory and art of sermon-making. It does not begin even with the preacher as such, but with the man himself. There is no escape from this requirement. Were we intrusted with plenary apostolic inspiration we should still be, as the Apostles were, not God's telephones or speaking-tubes, but His speakers. The word of salvation, indeed, is not the preacher's own, and he should receive it, through meditation, prayer, and study of the Scriptures, immediately from God; but it is his part to receive it, and the utterance of it is his own human and personal act. Only through each man's own personality can he know and communicate the truth. So, what manner of men we are, even in our secret soul, will appear in our preaching.

Very appropriate, then, is the prayer, "Lord, what wilt Thou have me to *be?*"

What is the Christian ideal manhood? The answer is much too large to be given here, but the chief directions in which it will be found may be indicated. Personal perfection is to be sought:

1. In *health.* Whatever may be true of pietism or asceticism, Christianity does not undervalue the body. How could it when, through the mysterious unity of our nature, neglect or maltreatment of the body tends to injure the soul, and when it is only through their bodies that souls can become known to one another?

> "Let us not always say,
> 'Spite of this flesh to-day
> I strove, made head, gained ground upon the whole.'

As the bird wings and sings,
Let us cry, 'All good things
Are ours, nor soul helps flesh more, now, than flesh helps soul.'"

A call to preach is, for one thing, a call to have as perfect physical purity and vigor as possible. For the preacher's body must enter no less truly than his soul into all his ministrations. Ten thousand sermons every Sunday are made feeble by feeble nerves, or heavy by heavy limbs, or repellent by acidity of the stomach. Ten thousand are sweetened and vivified by the pure tone of physical vitality in the preacher.

What is health? Not muscular agility, nor stature, nor fatty tissue. It is not even strength, though promotive of it. The brawniest man is not always the healthiest, and an unmuscular man may have perfect soundness of body. Health is that physical state in which all the organs harmoniously perform their functions. Above all things else it is nervous energy; to be prodigal of which is suicidal. "Better to lose a pint of blood than to have a nerve tapped." Health is painlessness and vitality. We want enough of it not simply to keep us off the sick-list, but to make it a joy to live. Think of Wesley on his eighty-fifth birthday making the record in his journal that he feels "no such thing as weariness either in traveling or preaching," and that he is able to write sermons as readily as he ever could, and ascribing it in part to his having had so little pain in his life, and having never lost a night's sleep, sick or well, on land or sea, since he was born! I noticed in my paper this morning that Mr. Gladstone, in the same year of his age, has resigned his office as Premier of England; not however because of any impairment of his general health or intellectual vigor. On meeting a man of this type it is not worth while to inquire about his health. He never complains. There are others of whom it is equally unnecessary to make the inquiry; the answer may be anticipated: "Something of a headache, indigestion, nervous prostration, overwork." They are never well. Ordinarily it is their own fault, and instead

of unmanly calls for sympathy, the case demands penitence and reformation.

To nurse and coddle one's health, to take a womanish pleasure in referring to one's ailments, to think it interesting to spend one's life in a state of chronic valetudinarianism, is a wretched sort of self-exaltation. Susannah Arnold, sister to Arnold of Rugby, through a daily martyrdom of twenty years of pain, "adhered to her early formed resolution of *never talking about herself.*" Before which womanly strength and sublimity of soul many a one who claims the reverence due a man and a minister of Christ appears at a shameful disadvantage.

The measure of physical energy of which you find yourself this moment possessed may be kept or wasted, increased or diminished. In food, in sleep, in breathing, in exercise, in all physical habits, honor the laws of God in your body. Cultivate a disrelish for late hours. Sleep for recuperation, not for self-indulgence. Encourage the appetite for the pure air of heaven and do not fear taking it too freely. Conscientiously abstain from lounging and all bodily inertness. *Less food and more exercise* would be good advice to many ministers and ministerial students.

Let it be admitted that even with impaired health a good day's work may be done. The number is not small of great souls, mighty in word and deed, embarrassed by feeble and ailing bodies. The Apostle to the Gentiles had his "infirmity in the flesh," and Timothy his "often infirmities." Of Calvin, Baxter, and Tholuck it has been said that they "did their work along the brink of the valley of death." Bernard of Clairvaux was a man of incessant activity, the most influential Christian of his day, and yet with health so broken by the severities of self-discipline as to have been "really a wretched invalid during all his public life." Robert Hall was a sickly-looking child, and much of his life was spent in heroic endurance of disease and pain. Fletcher of Madeley was a consumptive. Francis

Asbury had "headaches, toothaches, chills, fevers, and sore throats for his traveling companions." Moses Stuart was not strong enough to study more than three hours a day. Spurgeon was hardly ever physically well, and sometimes hobbled in agony to his pulpit. Still we should be very blind not to discriminate between instruments and obstacles, between *through the use of* and *in spite of*. God may make His strength perfect in weakness, but we are to set no thorn in our own flesh. Choose to live—in the widest sense of the word, to *live*—for Christ, while it is always your earnest expectation and hope that Christ may be magnified in your body, "whether it be by life or by death."

2. In *taste*. The sense of beauty is universal. One of the first words the child learns to say is the word *pretty*. The Spanish adventurers in America were surprised that the Indians should so readily barter a lump of silver or gold for a little hawk's-bell; but the Indian showed surprise that the Spaniard should be willing to exchange so charming a toy for a lump of gold. The earliest form of literature is poetry, with its inevitable accompaniment of music; both of them attempts to give sensible expression to the spirit of beauty.

Internal craving is met by external fact. There is nothing more common than beautiful things. What is their deepest meaning? What word of God do they bring us?

They symbolize the glory and excellence of the spiritual mind. These things are an allegory. Whoever has skill to read it has found a language in which to speak of the interior life of the soul. How are we affected in contemplating a cruel or treacherous or fleshly character? Sickened and repelled, as if our eyes had fallen upon some loathsome and disgusting object. But to witness an act of moral heroism, of disinterested kindness, of self-renouncing pursuit of truth, of high-souled purity and uprightness,—with what peculiar admiration and gladness does it thrill the heart! We have seen the spiritually beautiful. "Whose adorning, . . . let it be the hidden

man of the heart, in the incorruptible apparel of a meek and quiet spirit, which is in the sight of God of great price."

Moreover, is there not in these broken lights of earthly beauty a prophetic hint of the heavenly world? For, according to the very law of our minds, we pass upward from the imperfect to the complete, from the type to the antitype, from the real to the ideal (which is most truly the real); and so we learn that this strange glory that rests upon the earth must be the exponent of that unutterable and unimagined glory "within the veil." No man, not even the extremest Puritan or Quaker, has ever pictured to himself an ugly heaven.

Is not the beautiful in material things an expression even of something glorious in God's own nature? While Charles Kingsley lay on his death-bed he was heard repeating to himself the words, "How beautiful is God!" It was no irreverent familiarity. For what has the Psalmist said? "Let the beauty of the Lord our God be upon us." The fountain of beauty is in the heart of the Eternal, and the fair and lovely things of creation are one of the lines of light along which the reverent and imaginative mind ascends to Him.

The glad interpretative perception of beauty in nature and art, and its close congener, the sense of the becoming in manners and conduct, is *good taste*. It does not follow the fashions, but is often in antagonism to them. Like every other natural endowment, it is given to some persons in larger measure than to others, and in all it may be either appreciated and improved or despised. Not infrequently it has been prostituted to vile uses, as when it casts the charm of poetry, music, painting, or graceful manners about the desecrated objects of vice. It served the tempter's purpose in Eden, but its true spirit and purpose is divine. Can we imagine our Lord as doing an unrefined or unseemly act?

3. In *knowledge and thought*. Beginning life, as we do, absolutely ignorant, and having so few years in which to learn, it is very little we shall ever know in this world. And for the

start that can be made,—the knowing "in part" and "in a mirror darkly,"—we are largely indebted to teachers whom we have never seen. Even in such a library as you may soon gather you will keep company, heart to heart, with the gifted and good of your own and of long-past ages.

Surely no Christian can speak slightingly of books, since it has pleased God that His self-revelation in Israel and in Jesus Christ should be recorded and sent down to all subsequent ages in the books of the Bible. In all true literature, philosophy, and science the Eternal Reason is speaking, and those who have ears to hear receive His words. But through the Apostles and prophets, and above all through the incarnate Word, God has given the perfect revelation of His law and His love. Are all other books rendered thereby insignificant or valueless? I have heard some such sentiment expressed in the pulpit, but it is more Mohammedan than Christian. It is similar logic to the famous dilemma by which the burning of the great library of Alexandria was justified: "If the books contain the same doctrine as the Koran they are useless; if their doctrine is contrary to the Koran it is false." The Bible adds a new significance to all good and true books. They cannot but enlarge our knowledge of that God whom we know as Father and Saviour through the Book only.

But for none of these must the Bible itself be neglected. Read it and think it, on various methods, through and through.

Some persons show a love of letters which is a lifelong passion. They read, not because they must, but because they may, and not with the puerile ambition of being able to ask, "Have you read such a book?" but with the insatiable desire for knowledge and intellectual stimulus. They are likely to feel painfully their limitations, for it has been estimated that to read those books only which were the standards of their times would require three thousand years. But though it were possible, it would not be profitable to read even all the "stan-

dards." None but the best, new and old, and these wisely chosen with reference to each man's noblest purpose, may be taken as the rule.

But there are dangers besetting the reader's path. He may become a bookworm, which, as I understand it, is one who has sunk the end in the means. Or he may lower the tone of his own thinking by submitting too constantly to that of other minds. Suppose a man should keep listening all the time to some other man's talk, with hardly a word or a thought of his own. Would he not dwindle into a mental weakling? And what is reading, at least as commonly practised, but listening to an unseen talker? The preacher is sometimes heard complaining that he has to speak so much in comparison with the time that he has for reading. But this necessity is really an opportunity. Here, as elsewhere, it is better to give than to receive. The preacher has the inestimable advantage of making his knowledge immediately available in his ministry. Thus it becomes truly his own; knowledge deepens into thought, and the mental powers are developed through their higher and more original processes. For what is the mind? Not a cup to be filled, but an eye to be cleared, an arm to be strengthened. The question is not so much, Have I read what has been written on this subject? as it is, Can I think the subject? It was said by Mrs. Browning in a letter to a friend: "I should be wiser, I am persuaded, if I had not read half so much; should have had stronger and better-exercised faculties, and should stand higher in my own approbation."

Or, still again, it is possible for the reader to degenerate into that wretchedly contracted state of mind in which it is hard to care for any truth or fact unless it be written in a book; whereas it is important that we should keep our eyes as wide open outside the study as within. Are we not as truly in God's wonderful world, surrounded with objects of knowledge innumerable, as were any of our cherished authors in their day? Learn from everything. Be interested in men; not merely in

character, but in *characters*. Said a ship-builder to a preacher: "When I listen to some preachers I can build a whole ship, but this morning, I declare, I could not lay a single plank." "How is that?" "Because you spoke like one who knew just what I needed, and I could not withdraw my attention from you for a moment." The words of the woman of Samaria are homiletically suggestive: "Come, see a man, who told me all things that ever I did." He is an ignorant minister who is ignorant of human nature. Do not ignore the newspaper. Be men of your time. Know its virtues, its faults, its needs, its possibilities; and thus learn how to approach it with that which it needs more than anything else, the truth about Him who is "the same yesterday, to-day, and forever." It is not especially if at all important that you should be what are called "learned" men; but it is of the highest importance that you should have first-hand views of Scripture, of nature, of the soul, of the dispositions and doings of your fellows, of each man's relations to God. To help us in this, to cause us to "believe in life rather than in books," is one of the chief functions of learning.

Nevertheless, most Christians are not, in any proper sense of the word, readers. Indeed, the same thing may be said of many ministers of Christ. They glance over the newspaper, or perhaps the review, but they do not *read*. Not one book that is worthy of the name, old or new, big or little, do they make their own in a year. They may have a collegiate education, but they have not learned to read. Their intellectual life is poor and barren.

"Brethren, be not children in mind: howbeit in malice be ye babes, but in mind be men" (1 Cor. xiv. 20).

4. In *sympathetic sensibility*. It is by this power that we know other souls. When an observer would *realize* a material object it is not enough to see it; he puts forth his hand and touches it. This gives the full sense of its reality; he knows it because he has *felt* it. In like manner the intellect is the

eye with which we see other souls, but the sensibility is the hand with which we touch them.

We were made for one another. It is impossible that a man should so pervert his nature as to become absolutely a solitaire. But as to genial recognition of the presence of others, quick response to their looks and words, entrance by sympathy into their lives, the range of difference in individuals is very wide. Some are stolid and self-engrossed; they are never known to laugh heartily; their eyes are dry and seem to be looking within, if anywhere. Their expression in conversation is indifferent or critical rather than receptive. Your most vivacious questions and appeals kindle so uncertain a light on their faces that you are disposed to feel ashamed, as if guilty of some unseemly demonstration. Others instinctively take your mood upon themselves, not necessarily to linger in it or reflect it back, but perhaps in a little while to lift you into theirs. Their greeting is cordial, their parting tender, their whole manner responsive and inspiring. From which of these two classes would you prefer to have a companion on a festive occasion, or in time of perplexity and suffering—or at any other time? Which is the completer soul?

Of all men the public speaker can least afford to be sympathetically insensible. His mind may work with the unvarying accuracy of a logical machine and his style be crystal clear, but unless there be the magnetic thrill of sympathy between him and his audience the speech is simply from intellect to intellect, not from heart to heart, not *from man to man.*

To live too much in the sensations will blunt the finer sensibilities. But not only sensuality, worldliness also, ambition, any indulgence of selfishness, tends rapidly to weaken and waste the humanity of our nature. Complete absorption in an intellectual pursuit may have a similar effect. There is even a type of religion in which stoicism, or an unsocial mysticism, or a narrow conscientiousness has permitted the springs of human affection to dry up. Good men, willing, if need be, to die for

their convictions, but cold, austere, censorious, whom little children do not like to be with, are both in our congregations and in our pulpits. They have missed the graciousness and the compassion of Jesus.

5. In *spirit and character.* Here we touch the very summit and crown of our nature. If it be true that "there is nothing great on earth but man, and nothing great in man but mind," it is true in the same sense that there is nothing great in mind but character. The earth would seem to have reached its highest end in becoming the scene of human activity, the birthplace, trial-ground, and training-ground of man. Wherein does man reach his highest end? Not in becoming perfect in body, in taste, in intellect, in sensitiveness of soul, but in attaining a right spiritual character. It were infinitely better for any one of us to be diseased in body, unrefined, ignorant, and emotionally sluggish, but genuinely conscientious, sincerely good, than, lacking this, to have all other possible gifts and acquisitions.

By the spirit of a man is meant the sum total of the feelings, the motives, that habitually influence him; by his character is meant the habitual attitude of his will under this influence. The distinguishing greatness of character is that, being a state of the will, it is a state of freedom. This makes it more *one's own* and *one's self* than anything else can be. Here only does man become man; for all the way up from the dust beneath our feet to the intellect and the sensibility of the soul, is there the region of necessity, and hence the utter absence of personality. *Who* are you? The question means essentially, What is the course of self-determinations, of free choices, that you are making, through the motives that have power over your will from day to day? For example, you have some difficult intellectual work to do; and the flesh rebels, the thoughts are inclined to play the vagrant. It would be so much easier to take up some lighter occupation. But the higher motives are also insistent. Now, whether you will faithfully endeavor to

do that tiresome work or not depends upon no system of necessity, either in the body or the soul, but upon your true personal self. Or you believe it a duty to make some communication to a friend that will cost you embarrassment and pain. The temptation is to put it off indefinitely. Which will be done? Every day, every hour, are we thus called on to decide between the flesh and the spirit, the good and the evil. And it is such familiar, constantly occurring cases that are the revelation of a man to himself and his fellow-men.

Shall we make a distinction between morality and religion? Truly speaking, there is none. To live in obedience to the commands of conscience is to be a moral man; but to live in obedience to the commands of conscience is to recognize the presence and obey the words of God, in whatever measure He may be pleased to make Himself known, and this is religion. May we regard the Ten Commandments and the Sermon on the Mount as summaries of the moral law? No man can accept them as the rule of life without becoming a worshiper and an obedient child of God.

What is perfection of character? The ancients would have returned various answers to the question, each containing some elements of truth. But the modern conception of man is greatly different from that of the old world, and the change is due to the influence of that one Life which has proved itself to be supremely "the light of men." The ideal of character became actual in Jesus. The Son of God, Himself is the interpretation of His own words: "Ye therefore shall be perfect, as your heavenly Father is perfect." Great was the variety of circumstances and relations in which Jesus appeared,—as a child and as a man, in work and in suffering, in the home, in church, among His friends, in the face of His enemies, before the multitude, at the wedding, in the chamber of death, on trial for His life, in the death of the cross. In them all He lived in perfect sonship to God and perfect love to men. Such a heart and spirit had never been manifested in a human

life before. Those who have shown most of it since gladly and gratefully acknowledge that it is not of themselves, but through communion with Him. Those who refuse to call Him Lord still find it difficult to rest in any ideal of man save that which He has perfectly exemplified. It shines by its own light, showing itself divine; so that to "attain unto a full-grown man" is self-evidently to "attain unto the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ." And as to the future, the largest hope that a human heart has ever cherished for itself is that of the Christian disciple: "We know that, if He shall be manifested, we shall be like Him; for we shall see Him even as He is." In Christ the possibilities of our own souls appear; in Christ is the power to realize them.

The personal ideal is the same for all men, without reference to vocation. And in this—not in any special gifts, and still less in special training—is the first great secret of preaching. The sermon will be as the preacher, the preacher as the man, the man as the character. So the fundamental preparation to preach is in that which is common to men rather than in the specific or the extraordinary; not in the composition of the sermon, nor in the putting of ourselves into the best possible condition, physical, intellectual, and spiritual, just before its delivery; not in what we have got together for an occasion, but in what we *are*, out of the pulpit and all the time. The schoolboy who expresses himself so feebly in the recitation-room is eloquent and forcible enough among his companions outside; because it is himself that now speaks, not a lesson crammed for a temporary and unwelcome purpose. Some men are feeble in the pulpit because they are men who cannot be themselves there. The sermon is more or less a hothouse plant; the whole natural movement and force of a consecrated Christian life is not in it. I have heard a minister of the Gospel whose ordinary conversation was extremely trivial and jocular, defend himself on the ground that he was always serious in preaching. In other words, he did not take himself into the pulpit.

A preacher says: "To-morrow is Sunday, and I am not ready; I must get up something to say." Another says: "I shall have to preach to-morrow; I must go to work and prepare myself, so as to be in good condition." A third says: "It will soon be Sunday, and I shall have the glad opportunity to speak the word of life to the people." Which is the true preacher?

Read "The Imitation of Christ," Dr. Stalker's "Imago Christi," Dr. Mark Hopkins's "Strength and Beauty."

Part First

THE MINISTRY OF WORSHIP

SCHEME

I. Uses and Hindrances
II. Forms of Worship
    1. The Scripture Reading
    2. The Hymn
    3. The Prayers
III. The Prayer-meeting

And he said, Show me, I pray Thee, Thy glory.—Ex. xxxiii. 18.

I had heard of Thee by the hearing of the ear;
But now mine eye seeth Thee,
Wherefore I abhor myself, and repent
In dust and ashes.—Job xlii. 5, 6.

So have I looked upon Thee in the sanctuary,
To see Thy power and Thy glory.
For Thy loving kindness is better than life;
My lips shall praise Thee.—Ps. lxiii. 2, 3.

For thus saith the high and lofty One that inhabiteth eternity, whose name is Holy: I dwell in the high and holy place, with him also that is of a contrite and humble spirit, to revive the spirit of the humble, and to revive the heart of the contrite ones.—Isa. lvii. 15.

For where two or three are gathered together in My name, there am I in the midst of them.—Matt. xviii. 20.

And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit.—Acts ii. 4.

Now unto Him that is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that worketh in us, unto Him be the glory in the church and in Christ Jesus unto all generations for ever and ever.—Eph. iii. 20, 21.

And I saw no temple therein: for the Lord God the Almighty, and the Lamb, are the temple thereof.—Rev. xxi. 22.

LECTURE I.

USES AND HINDRANCES

THE conduct of public worship is, like preaching, a ministry. True, the minister's utterance of praise and prayer is not *to* the congregation, but it is made *before* the congregation and with the express purpose that it may also become theirs. He brings an offering to the altar and says to the people: "It is yours and mine; let us offer it together unto the Lord."

As regards the people. It is well to listen with sympathetic attention to the sermon, but it is better to worship God. Indeed, is not the very object of the sermon to bring men near to God, to make the hearer a worshiper? For what higher act can any created being do than freely to give himself back to the divine Source of his life and enter into holy communion with Him? Only then is the circle of life completed,—when the soul of its own will returns, full of reverent love, to its Creator. There, with God, reconciled by the Cross, may be found the power and blessedness of eternal life. To worship God, whether in secret or in the congregation, is holiness and salvation. Are you ready to be a leader in it?

Now there can be no worship without some kind of religious emotion, more or less ardent,—contrition, awe, gratitude, adoring wonder, peace, joy, hope; but its deeper element, the very heart of worship, is not an emotion, but a motive. Christian adoration is a spiritual *act*.

I. What are some of the **Uses** of congregational worship?

1. It is *mutually helpful to the worshipers.* Christianity, it is true, revealed the worth of the individual soul. It took each man out of the mass into a direct personal relation with God, and awakened in him the most vivid consciousness of himself as a personal and accountable being,—the very opposite of that Greek philosophy in which the state appears as everything and the individual as nothing. "So then every one of us shall give account of himself to God." "Joy shall be in heaven over one sinner that repenteth." But, observe, this intense individuality finds its counterpart in that strong social unity which it renders possible. The Christian brotherhood arises,—the *ecclesia*, the church,—and places of conference and congregational worship are found as naturally and inevitably as any family, in poverty or in affluence, will find a house and make it a home. The saintliest soul is there with the feeblest beginner in religion, the nobleman and the slave, all in need of this communion of souls in communion with God. "I long to see you," writes Paul to the Christians in Rome, "that I may impart unto you some spiritual gift, to the end you may be established; that is, that I with you may be comforted in you, each of us by the other's faith, both yours and mine" (Rom. i. 11, 12).

We speak of this worship as "services," "religious services," "service," "divine service," and advertise it to take place at such a time. The word *liturgy*, in like manner, means literally a public ministry or service; but the only sense in which such terms are applicable seems to be generally lost sight of. Do we serve God by asking for His blessings, by acknowledging the bestowment of them upon us, by devoutly meditating upon His Word? Rather are we now receiving, and it is our heavenly Father, the Lord of heaven and earth, who is serving us. Out in the world, striving to extend His kingdom, doing good to the bodies and souls of men, we are employed in the service of God. But so far as worship is consecration it is giv-

ing ourselves to God *for* this service. So far as we bring an offering of money to His house we may be said to serve Him. Besides, in congregational worship we serve one another. The part which each takes is, with reference to the others, a ministration; especially, as we have seen, is the minister, both as preacher and as devotional leader, the servant of all. And this *is* "divine service." In a Sunday-school session or a revival both worship and service are prominent.

From a misconception of the liturgic or ministrative idea arises the vain multiplication of rites, the worshiping of God "with men's hands, as though He needed anything." On the other hand, the due appreciation of this idea, while not hindering the devotional spirit, will call forth the spirit of brotherly sympathy and help.

2. This being so, we *make a new and larger offering to God.* Only in society does man become truly man. Think of a human being who had grown up in utter solitude. What would he be? Without language, without love, without intelligence, without morality, without religion. In association with our fellows, not only dormant affections, but also conscience and will are aroused, and the whole heart is enlarged. It is not until we lose ourselves in sympathy with others that we find our truer self. Accordingly, when men come to unite in unselfish fellowship it is a whole that is greater than the sum of all its parts. And when they come and worship God together it is a new and larger self that each offers to Him. The chorus is greater than the single voice not only in volume, but also in an added element: melody has become harmony.

3. It is also a *testimony to the world.* Does it separate between the devout and the ungodly? It also brings them strangely near to each other. It is *public* worship; even those who only look and listen are welcome, not intruders upon the hallowed scene. Thus the assembled church witnesses for God, declaring His truth and glory, and calling men to Him. A benevolent deed must not be done for display: "Let not

thy left hand know what thy right hand doeth." Neither should it be studiously done in secret, where none can profit by the example: "Even so let your light shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven." So with an act of worship: "My mouth shall praise Thee with joyful lips; when I remember Thee upon my bed, and meditate on Thee in the night watches"; "For I had gone with the multitude, I went with them to the house of God, with the voice of joy and praise, with a multitude that kept holyday." When a child, having grown up in a home, is able to say, "I have never seen my father or my mother on their knees," it is sad for both parent and child. Neither would it be well that those who do not themselves worship should never hear the sound of prayer and praise in the house of the Lord. "And it came to pass, as He was praying in a certain place, that when He ceased, one of His disciples said unto Him, Lord, teach us to pray" (Luke xi. 1). Thousands have been won to a prayerful life by the unconscious influence of those whom they saw in prayer. Especially does that most sacred and significant ordinance, the Lord's Supper, have the character of a testimony: "For as often as ye eat this bread, and drink the cup, ye proclaim the Lord's death till He come" (1 Cor. xi. 26).

II. But there arise many **Hindrances** to the true worship of God in the congregation, and it is to some of these that I must now ask attention.

1. *Vanity*. The sin of devotional self-applause has not disappeared with the disuse of phylacteries and the sacred borders of the garment. Many a man who would shrink away in painful embarrassment from any intrusion upon his private devotions will cherish a subtle, secret pride in the performance of his part in public worship. Is there no temptation to vanity in the reader of a ritual, and even in the congregation as they make their united responses to the rich and rhythmic formulary, "*meekly* kneeling upon their knees"? Nor is the case of ex-

temporaneous prayer essentially different, as every one who has been called on to lead in it is sadly aware. We may make *our* "long prayers" in the church to receive glory of men, and so may gain the hypocrite's reward—looking unto the Lord, with many a side-glance at the admiring faces of our fellow-men.

> "And now the chapel's silver bell you hear,
> That summons you to all the pride of prayer."

2. *Formalism.* This species of hypocrisy is an imitation of the proper signs of devotional life; and is as distasteful to the spiritual mind as prose expressed in meter and rhyme to the poetic taste, or as the opening eyes and twitching limbs of a galvanized corpse to the natural feelings of all men. It is the "holy kiss" of the Corinthian church, in the midst of envying and discord; it is the asking of a blessing at the daily meal, followed by gormandizing or gluttony.

Its theological consummation is the investment of a form with some magic power of regeneration or upbuilding. Thus has sacramentarian dogma arisen to corrupt Christian worship as taught by Christ and His apostles. Even a Henry P. Liddon could declare his conviction that the apostolic succession is necessary not merely to the well-being, but to the very existence of the church of Christ; even a Luther could teach that the body and blood of our Lord are literally received by the communicants in the sacramental Supper; even the Augsburg Confession could "condemn the Anabaptists, who assert that unbaptized infants can possibly be saved"; even a Richard Watson could write it down in his "Institutes of Theology," that the baptism of an infant "secures the gift of the Holy Spirit in those spiritual influences by which the actual regeneration of those children who die in infancy is effected, and which are a seed of life in those who are spared." It is human to rest in that which we can see and touch, as though the springs of our life were there. Therefore, all through the Christian ages God's prophets are sent forth, even as in

ancient Israel,—the Apostles, the reformers, the revivalists, the spiritually-minded pastors,—to hold up the high Christian ideal of life and call us back from idolatry to the worship of God.

No matter what the particular form may be, however simple and appropriate, however artificial or puerile,—the solemn-voiced Presbyterian prayer, the procession of the Roman Catholic Church, the knee-drill of the Salvation Army,—to occupy attention with the form rather than with the object of worship is externalism, formalism. The pastor who called on a young brother for prayer in a revival, and charged him to make it "short, sharp, and fiery," was encouraging formalism while perhaps intending to secure the exactly opposite result. The same objection must be made to many of the well-meant directions that are given and reiterated in prayer-meeting as to the *manner* of singing. We are not to change the worshiping assembly into a singing-class, the battle-field into a parade-ground. To remind others, directly or indirectly, of the great reality of the Divine Presence,—this is to help them in worship.

3. *Mental vacuity or preoccupation.* Many of those who with bowed heads are showing respect for the minister's prayer are really doing nothing else. They hear it, and hear it not. Indeed, if he who utters it would always speak what is uppermost in his mind, would it not sometimes be a strangely different utterance? Similarly, in the offering of praise, are not the lips found moving oftentimes when head and heart have fallen asleep? Or on some such background of consciousness as this, "In church, singing, customary, good hymn, in company with other people," what unfit thoughts and fancies go flitting across the mind, and even, lingering unrebuked, take possession of it!

Good is it to worship with our thoughts, to meditate in silence upon the name and the ways of our God. The protest of George Fox and his followers against externalism and worldliness in the church, and their doctrine of the "inner, universal, and saving light," though enfeebled by extravagance,

were timely and fruitful. Meditation and prayer are closely related and as much alike as the kindling fire and the rising flame: "While I was musing the fire kindled: then spake I with my tongue, Lord, make me to know mine end" (Ps. xxxix. 3, 4). Fellow-worshipers in the meeting-house may be helpful to one another through the unobtrusive sense of one another's presence, without a spoken word.

> "And from the silence multiplied
> By these still forms on either side,
> The world that time and sense have known
> Falls off and leaves us God alone."

Can we not sympathize with the devout Scotchman's mood, who, being a little deaf, was requested to come up nearer at the celebration of the Lord's Supper, that he might hear, and replied, "Na, na; I dinna want to hear"?

But even silence and darkness are no effectual security against preoccupation of mind. Though every tongue be hushed and every eye closed, the mind may be overrun with images of sense and all manner of vain and irrelevant thoughts; more so, in the case of many minds, than when the sound of worship is falling on the ear. Such silence is not divine communion.

4. *Sensuousness.* There is an eloquence that startles the nerves into delicious tremors, but gives little more than this refined sensuous gratification. In like manner public worship may so fill the eye and ear with delight as to detain the soul in the senses instead of setting it free to draw nigh unto God. If there be no special danger to spirituality of worship in the accumulation of sensuous attractions, the history of Christianity and the philosophy of human nature alike have proved untrustworthy witnesses.

But on the other hand, ugliness and discord are not means of grace. If it is true that behind God's unceasing ministry of beauty in earth and sky, in nature and through the hand of

art, is the unseen glory, awaiting its day of revelation in "the new heavens and the new earth, in which dwelleth righteousness," then it must be true that a certain excitation of the sense of the beautiful may be devotionally helpful. How wonderfully kind the Providence that withdraws the veil of light evening by evening from the most elevating and sublime of all scenery,—before which the Yosemite and the Alps dwindle into insignificance,—even to the dwellers in the narrowest alley or the most crowded tenement of the city! A young friend of mine, a shoemaker, faithful to his daily round of uninspiring toil, said, "When my faith gets weak I walk out and look at the stars." No wonder such a sight should kindle thought into adoration and awe that struggle in vain for adequate speech—"O God, I praise Thee; let me live forever to know more, to become more, to do more for Thee."

In worship the senses should be neither the masters nor the dishonored castaways, but the ready servitors of the soul. The scene before the eye by its "quiet" colors may subdue the spirit into thoughtfulness and trust, or by some unobtrusive symbolism may quicken it to lay hold of the invisible. Music may tranquilize or soften or inspire. Our Lord would reach the soul through the senses when He says, "Go, disciple all nations, *baptizing* them"; and again when He bids His disciples eat and drink the bread and wine of the Supper in remembrance of Him. And yet how far is that perfect teaching from authorizing pomp and showiness, elaborateness of ceremony, or any luxurious indulgence of sense in the worship of God!

There is another sort of sensuousness in worship to which some of us are inclined. In many a religious meeting the effort of the leader, with hymn and prayer and exhortation, from beginning to end, seems to be to work up himself and the congregation into a state of exhilaration; not to humble the soul in deep contrition before the All-holy One, not to gain deliverance from the power of self and have the law of God

written in the heart, but to be borne aloft on some tide of enjoyable feeling. We have it illustrated in the frequent writhing and screaming, the wild yet superficial waves of emotion, able to give no account of itself, in the African meeting-house; nor do we always need to go so far in order to find an example. Is it, then, for self-repression and against natural animation and excitement in divine worship that I am pleading? I trust it is for this: "The hour cometh, and now is, when the true worshipers shall worship the Father in spirit and truth: for such doth the Father seek to be His worshipers" (John iv. 23).

5. *Disorder.* It was with reference to meetings for congregational worship that Paul wrote to the Corinthians, "Let all things be done decently and in order." The precept implies the giving up of individual preference or habit for the good of the community. Without this there could be no order, and without order no common and mutual service. Those who would be built as stones into the temple of God must consent to have their sharp projections hewn away and their sides polished. It is God's law,—each adjusting itself to all, that each may serve and be served by all,—in heaven and earth, down to the very atoms of the molecule. The Corinthians had been so filled with a sense of their individual gifts and experiences that the peace and unity of their church were imperiled. Each had his "psalm" that he wished to sing, or his "teaching" or "interpretation" that he was eager to deliver. This was well enough; but one would not wait for another, and many speaking together made a jargon that was not "unto edifying." In the days of the old Bay Psalm Book in the Puritan churches of New England, there were some congregations that had no leader of the singing: when a psalm was announced each sang it to such a tune as seemed right in his own eyes. But Paul declared to the church of Corinth his determination to sing and pray not only "with the spirit,"—i.e., from his inmost spiritual experience and impulse,—but "with the understand-

ing also,"—under the direction of reason and judgment, which would remind him that others were present and would be influenced for good or evil by what he did.

Even the law of the land recognizes the necessity of order in congregational worship, and will lay its hand upon the disturber of a religious meeting. But for protection against the innumerable minor violations of good order we are dependent on each other's common sense and Christian feeling.

The minister—must it be confessed?—is not infrequently the chief offender. When, for example, it is his habit:

To talk and laugh in the pulpit with some brother minister, though ready, perhaps, to rebuke with uncalled-for severity a similar offense in the congregation;

To gaze vacantly or curiously about instead of being occupied cheerfully, gravely, and intently with the duty of the hour;

To smooth his hair, to "brush it unnaturally back from his forehead, that its roughness may look terrible," to adjust his clothing, or in any way to put the finishing touch on his toilet before the congregation;

While some one else is leading in prayer, to fumble the leaves of the hymn-book in search of the next hymn;

To rise restlessly to find his Scripture lesson before the singing is done;

To lounge upon the pulpit sofa;

To sit with his legs crossed in the form of ▲ triangle (an intolerably unseemly habit);

To blow his nose as if it were a trumpet;

To use his handkerchief needlessly;

When he has occasion to enter or to leave the chancel, to save himself a few steps by stepping over the railing;

To ascend from the chancel to the pulpit platform at one stride, ignoring the steps;

To throw his overcoat over the chancel-rail and put his hat on one of the posts;

To reprove disorder so as to create greater disorder;

To remember some announcement a little late, and give it after the people have bowed their heads for the benediction;

To show a spirit of levity, of absent-mindedness, of slouchiness, of rudeness, in any of the innumerable ways in which it is inevitably betrayed.

What may be said of responses in prayer? In the Jewish synagogue the "Amen" was spoken by the people in concert (Neh. viii. 6). From the synagogue the custom passed over to the early Christian churches (1 Cor. xiv. 16). Justin Martyr, describing congregational worship in the second century, says: "Then we all rise together and pray, and, as we before said, when our prayer is ended bread and wine are brought, and the president in like manner offers prayers and thanksgivings, according to his ability, and the people assent, saying, 'Amen.'" The same ancient custom is practised in liturgic worship at the present day. In non-liturgic churches, on the other hand, not a single response is likely to be heard from first to last. But even though the liturgy be laid aside, why not retain the "Amen" as a free response to prayer? Why is it that all will unite without hesitation in a concert of responses, whereas only one here or there, or none at all, feels it a duty or a joy to make individual and voluntary responses? By all means let individual responses be encouraged, not noisy or mechanical, but real and fervent, from every worshiper.

Order is a much larger and more vital word than uniformity. What if the "order of exercises" should not be exactly the same on every similar occasion? This will never destroy the church, unless Romanism should prove to have a truer instinct in such a matter than New Testament Christianity. Every rubric is not to be regarded as a rule of iron.

But no departure from the established order must be radical or extreme, and even a slight variation should be justifiable by some sufficient reason. There is room for liberty within the spirit of the law, but not for eccentricity or caprice.

LECTURE II

FORMS OF WORSHIP—THE SCRIPTURE READING

TO give up forms would be to sever our relation to the world of sense. And in religion as little as elsewhere can we escape from this divinely appointed condition of our present life. The kingdom of God takes outward form, and we have the church. The Word of God in the heart of prophet and apostle takes outward form, and the result is the Scriptures. The Word of God in the heart of the Christian preacher of the present day takes outward form, and we hear the preaching of the Gospel in the power of the Spirit. Similarly have arisen the observances of congregational worship. These, as we have already noted, are the necessary outward expression of the devotional life. Even the sitting in silence at an appointed hour in the meeting-house,—what is it but an observance, a form? And for regular church-going we may claim the authority of the perfect Example: "He came to Nazareth, where He had been brought up: and, *as His custom was*, He went into the synagogue on the Sabbath day, and stood up for to read" (Luke iv. 16). Even to the synagogue of His time, with its mechanical prayers and fanciful, pettifogging expositions of Scripture, Jesus would go on the Sabbath day.

But form can justify its existence only as necessary to the expression and communication of power. I see a summer leaf on the oak-tree in my yard,—small, fragile, sensitive to every pulsation of air. Nevertheless, it is exerting a force—so

those who know tell us—comparable to that of the steam-power that grinds our wheat and propels our railway-trains. But not the "it" that I have just described as so small and frail. That is but the sensible embodiment; the life-power is the real leaf.

Of no truth of religion may we be more certain than that the worship of God is "in spirit." But the angels themselves are not silent and motionless in worship. The proper antithesis of formality is not *formlessness*, but spirituality. A Coleridge may stand "before sunrise in the vale of Chamouni," and be so lost to the outer world as no longer to see "the dread and silent mount" before him—"entranced in prayer." But the next thing will be the utterance of the inner melody:

> "Awake,
> Voice of sweet song! Awake, my heart, awake!
> Green hills and icy cliffs, all join *my hymn*."

The persistent effort to worship God without a form would end in the negation of intelligence and will,—in the extremest mysticism.

The reason why some of us have so poor a gift in prayer is that we do not talk much to God in private. And the reason why our private devotions need so little speech is not always that we "sit dumb because we know a speechless good," and feeling the inadequacy of any human language, just sum up all in one great word,—"O Lord, Thou knowest," "Thy will be done." Sometimes it is because we have so little to say.

Will the life of the spirit express itself naturally in its own appropriate forms of congregational worship? Dr. Behrends, in his "Philosophy of Preaching," has said so: "It is in the conduct of worship as with godliness; you can have the form without the power, but you cannot have the power without the appropriate form, and where the power is perfect the form will be perfect." No doubt this is true and full of significance; but it is also true that there is no one most perfect and beau-

tiful form of congregational worship. Even though the "power" should be exactly the same in two congregations, it by no means follows that the two forms would be indistinguishable. It could not be so unless the congregations were exactly alike in taste, temperament, mental culture, all endowments and education. And who does not know the impossibility of finding even two individuals of the billion upon earth of whom this is true? The spirit of worship, so far from keeping clear of these differences, expresses itself through them and is tinctured and molded by them. Life "builds in lines of beauty" indeed, but these are at the same time lines of infinite variety. The shrub is not the tree, nor are the maple and the willow the same. Each Christian church must adopt some forms of worship; each should adopt such as are practically best, most perfectly adapted to express the spiritual aspirations of the generality of worshipers.

It can never be an easy matter for any widely extended church to construct such a form and order of worship for its congregations. But thus much may be accepted as proved: The two extremes of Quakerism and ritualism do not best express the needs of Christian souls in their endeavor to worship God together. And of this proposition, too, we need have no doubt: The forms of worship observed by the disciples of Jesus in apostolic times may be taken as a model for all times; not to be slavishly copied, for they are not without local coloring (neither is the decalogue or the Sermon on the Mount), but truly a part of that Christian simplicity from which the church cannot be removed without the loss of truth and power.

What, then, were the characteristics of congregational worship in the New Testament churches? It was patterned after the synagogue, not after the temple—no altar, no priest. It was shared in by all, not performed by one in behalf of all. It was orderly, not unregulated. It was free, not restricted to prescribed forms. It consisted of singing, prayers, the read-

ing of the Scriptures, the celebration of the Lord's Supper, and the word of praise or of exhortation from any member of the worshiping assembly who might be moved by the Holy Spirit to speak.

The advantages of written formularies of devotion are practically acknowledged by everybody. The doxology and the apostolic benediction, which are heard in all Christian churches every Sunday, are liturgical forms. In the case of hymns, indeed, it is a matter not simply of expediency, but of necessity: we must either have a metrical liturgy or no congregational singing. Nor does any pious parent hesitate to teach his child some form of prayer. Indeed, the question would seem to have been settled forever to the followers of Christ by His own word of at least permissive authority (Matt. vi. 9–15; Luke xi. 1–13). The priceless prayer that Jesus has taught us to say is adapted to all His disciples in every stage of their spiritual experience. With all increase of knowledge and holiness it becomes more significant, more precious.

Generally speaking, however, the written prayer is for the beginning of Christian life rather than for its later stages; for the child rather than the man, the young convert rather than the mature Christian, the church in the first principles of religion rather than the church baptized with the Holy Spirit and enriched with all knowledge and with all utterance. And to exclude free prayer from the congregation cannot fail to prevent or arrest the development of its devotional life. Let all the ignorance, unspirituality, and general incompetence of the offerers of extemporary prayer be sadly and frankly admitted: the right inference is not that all prayer except what has been written down and prescribed should be prohibited. Such a conclusion belongs not to the dispensation of the Spirit.

"The conclusion reached," says Dr. S. M. Hopkins, in the "Schaff-Herzog Encyclopedia," "by eminent members of both liturgical and non-liturgical churches is that a system that should unite the propriety and dignity of venerable forms with

the flexibility and adaptation to occasions of free prayer would be superior to any existing method."

The rituals in use in various churches at the present day have an interesting history. Some parts of them are taken from the Scriptures; the origin of other parts is lost in the obscurity of the early Christian centuries. Written liturgies first appear in the fourth century (in the time of Basil the Great, A.D. 329–379). But in our present rituals are fragments of hymns and prayers that seem to have arisen as oral forms long before that time.

The liturgy of the Church of England during the Roman Catholic period was in the Latin language, and consisted of a collection of prayers derived partly from the primitive churches and partly from the Church of Rome. There was no one liturgy, however, in universal use in England.

The renunciation of Roman supremacy by King Henry VIII. made an opportunity for the principles of the Reformation, and soon thereafter steps began to be taken toward a revision and amendment of the liturgy in accordance with these purer doctrines of Christianity. In pursuance of this object the first Book of Common Prayer was published in 1548, the second year of the reign of Edward VI. Its chief basis was a service-book compiled by a bishop of Salisbury in the eleventh century, which was called the "Sarum Use" (i.e., the liturgy in *use* in *Salisbury*). It was the work of thirteen learned divines, the martyrs Cranmer and Ridley being of the number. There were four subsequent revisions. The last was made in the reign of Charles II., in the year 1662, since which time there has been no material alteration in the English Prayer-book.

When the Methodist Episcopal Church in this country was organized, in 1784, Wesley prepared a prayer-book for its use, —"The Sunday Service of the Methodists in America." It was taken from the English Book of Common Prayer as an abridgement with alterations, somewhat as that book was ex-

tracted and compiled from preëxisting liturgies. But the "Sunday Service" met with little favor, and a few years later its publication was discontinued. Soon afterward, however, certain parts of it—such as the Order for the Administration of the Lord's Supper, the Order for Baptism, and the Order for the Burial of the Dead—were incorporated into the Discipline of the church, and these have continued in constant use, with slight modifications, to the present time.

The alterations made by Wesley in the English ritual consisted, to a large extent, like those made under the authority of the English church, in the elimination of Romish elements. Some of these changes were the following: in the Order for the Administration of the Lord's Supper, the use of the term *elder* for *priest*, the omission from the general confession of the words, "The burden of them [our sins] is intolerable," the change of the absolution into a prayer, the omission of certain exhortations and prayers; in the Order for the Administration of Baptism to Infants, all those parts relating to sponsors, and all those parts in which is implied the dogma of baptismal regeneration.

Any prescribed form may be so used as to make it a mockery of devotion. The petitions of the Lord's Prayer are often repeated by the minister so rapidly as to render it impossible to take in their meaning. Sometimes they are spoken in a manner that would seem to a thoughtful and reverent worshiper as hardly less than sacrilege. But it need not be. We can readily imagine a Pharisee glibly repeating a form of words,—of very sound words, it may be,—and priding himself in it, without any genuine realization of their meaning. We cannot think of a Christian apostle becoming addicted to such a habit. Much more is it impossible to think of our Lord as using any word, either His own or that of some ancient prophet, that He did not really know and mean. As we are striving to become like Him, so must we be self-recollected and sincere.

Now the subject before us in this and the two following lec-

tures will be the conduct of congregational worship with respect to its forms.

First I would ask your attention to the Scripture Reading.

It is a very ancient observance. Ezra the scribe, with his co-laborers, upon "a pulpit of wood," before his vast open-air audience, "read in the book, in the law of God, distinctly, and gave the sense, and caused them to understand the reading," translating and paraphrasing the pure Hebrew into the vernacular of the people (Neh. viii. 8). Dean Stanley has remarked: "The Bible and the reading of the Bible as an instrument of instruction may be said to have been begun on the sunrise of that day when Ezra unrolled the parchment scroll of the law. It was a new thought that the divine will could be communicated by a dead literature as well as by a living voice." But even in an earlier age, four hundred years before, there would seem to have been a Bible reading not essentially different from this, and on an equally extensive scale. King Jehoshaphat, whose "heart was lifted up in the ways of the Lord," sent out his princes with priests and Levites to teach the people: "And they taught in Judah, having the book of the law of the Lord with them; and they went about throughout all the cities of Judah, and taught among the people" (2 Chron. xvii. 9). In the Book of Deuteronomy, indeed, the command was given to read the law publicly every seven years at the Feast of Tabernacles (Deut. xxxi. 10–13). Later, in the synagogue, the whole of the Pentateuch and large portions of the prophets were read, in the course of each year, to the congregations of Israel. In the New Testament the apostle Paul bids Timothy "give heed to reading" (this same public reading of the Scriptures) as well as to "exhortation" and to "teaching" (1 Tim. iv. 13), and directs that the Epistle to the Colossians, after it has been read among them, "be read also in the church of the Laodiceans," and that they "also read the epistle from Laodicea" (Col. iv. 16). The Book of Revelation pronounces a blessing on the public reading and hearing of its contents

(ch. i. 3). From Justin Martyr, who died about the year 167, we learn that in his day the Gospels—"Memoirs of the Apostles," he calls them—and the Scriptures of the prophets were regularly read in the churches. Indeed, how could it have been otherwise than that the scribe both in Israel and in the Christian church should read the Word of God to the assembled people?

Ours is the *English* Bible. It has come down to us from five hundred years ago, through the hands not only of scholarship and genius, but of heroic self-denial and Christian martyrdom. We have had forefathers who dared the wrath of churchmen and of kings, and counted not their lives dear unto themselves, in the endeavor to give God's holy Word to the people in their own tongue. Wycliffe, who first translated the whole Bible into English, was saved by a timely illness and death from answering at Rome for this and other evangelical enterprises. Tyndale went into exile to do his work of translation, but there he was finally strangled to death and his body burned at the stake. Miles Coverdale's Bible was burned under royal authority; he himself was imprisoned, narrowly escaped martyrdom, fled from his native land. For two hundred and fifty years the Authorized Version, published under the authority of King James I., wrought a work in the thought, the speech, and the religious life of English-speaking people that has been hardly paralleled in any nation. But we have now something better. Since the year 1611 many English words have either become obsolete or changed their meaning Others are obsolescent, and hence unfamiliar to the ordinary reader. Besides, biblical scholarship has greatly improved, both in its materials and its processes. So the Revisers' Version has been given us. It sets forth in simple and familiar language, more truly than any of its predecessors, the meaning of the original Scriptures. Let us appreciate the singularly excellent form in which the Word of God appears in our pulpits and may be read to our people,—the *English Bible*.

But is not this reading of the Scriptures *instruction*, and therefore to be classed with preaching rather than with worship? Instruction, and more: it is coming together gratefully and reverently before God, to receive His Word, and with it to receive into our hearts the Spirit of truth, the Holy Spirit of God. Luther defined worship not inaptly as consisting of two elements, a passive and an active, the passive element being "to accept God's Word, or through the Word to be instructed."

Besides, a large part of Scripture has taken a devotional form. It consists of prayer or praise or devout meditation. Are not these intended to nourish and express our own devotional feeling? "Have mercy upon me, O God, according to Thy loving-kindness: according to the multitude of Thy tender mercies blot out my transgressions;" "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who according to His great mercy begat us again unto a living hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, unto an inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for you;"—are such words publicly read merely that the congregation may know them, and not also that they may appropriate them and therein express their own penitence and hope and adoring gratitude?

The reading of the Scriptures in the congregation, then, is both instruction and devotion, and it is not inappropriate to rise from our knees and say, "Let us *continue* the *worship* of God by reading," etc. So we are not surprised to learn that at one time in the primitive church it was a common usage for the people to stand, as an act of reverence, during this part of the services. Indeed, a precedent much more primitive might have been quoted by the Christians for this reverent attitude (Neh. viii. 5).

It must be acknowledged, however, that the Scripture reading in our churches is often not only undevotional, but altogether unedifying. The people submit to it as a seemly ceremony; they do not listen, save with the outward ear. Is

it because of intellectual heaviness or moral depravity on their part? It is largely because, in any true sense, the Scripture is not read to them. It would be easy to mention the names of preachers, some famous and others unknown, whose reading of the Scripture is listened to. Take a single example, the testimony of a grateful hearer: "One of the most precious heirlooms in the memory of the writer is the hushed and rapt interest with which, when a lad, he listened to the reading and addresses, given sometimes in a voice scarcely above a whisper, of the late Bishop McIlvaine of Ohio. His reading was interpretation in the highest degree. Inflection, emphasis, and chastened tone 'rightly divided the word of truth,' illumined obscure passages, and brought to light the hidden riches of secret places."

But in the case of many the selected lesson is not truly ministered to the congregation. The reading is probably marked by nothing more conspicuously than by an unmeaning sameness. It is all "intoned," or all reeled off in a quick, businesslike style, or all recited in a melancholy monotone. The selection from the Old Testament and that from the New; psalm, narrative, precept, doctrinal exposition; the prophet Isaiah and the apostle James; the story of Naaman the leper and the first chapter of John; the dirge and the halleluiah of a prophecy, the penitential sorrow and the exultant joy of a psalm,—all are rendered in the same tone, in the same intellectually lazy manner. Is this reverent or profane? It is but a lip-service, a dead work, from which the doer ought to turn away with shame and repentance.

What is it to read aloud? Not the same thing as to talk, either in conversation or publicly; for talking is the free utterance of one's own personal sentiments. Not the same thing as dramatic acting; for to act is to identify one's self with the personality of another and utter his sentiments as if they were one's own. Reading to people is taking up the sentiments that some person has felt and recorded at some past time and de-

livering them *for what they are*. We are not to read, then, as we talk, nor as an actor would play his part. Either of these two attitudes would be false in the reader. He must adjust himself to the true situation, as at once a learner and a teacher, a listener and a speaker. To convey the words of another to an audience, together with his own sympathetic realization of their contents, this is his humble and extremely difficult office. The tone of voice will be more subdued than in the other two modes of elocution, but not necessarily less vital and intense.

Nowhere on the face of the earth ought this office to be so effectively fulfilled as in the pulpit. But there is even a half-concealed prejudice in some minds against any well-defined endeavor to read the Scriptures well. The unspoken feeling is probably about this: "It is God's Word; let it do its own work; it needs no help from me." But why, then, read it at all? No; let us help it. Let us put ourselves between the written Word and our fellow-men as a medium of communication, elected of God, through which divine truth and power may pass. We must read with some tone, some emphasis, some expression. Supposing these to be different from what the subject requires, they have the effect of obscuration or misinterpretation. Four persons undertake to read to a group of listeners some piece of composition. The first renders it in a dull, mechanical monotone; the second with conscious effort and straining after "effect"; the third with misplaced emphasis, pauses, and inflections; the fourth with genuine expressiveness of manner. Which of the four has really read the piece? Reading is vocal interpretation. And what book, of all in the world, should be well interpreted, if not *the* Book of them all?

"It is God's Word." What is? The black marks made by the printer upon the page? The English sounds of which these letters are the signs? The punctuation and grammatical constructions? Not these; but the meaning of the Book, its truths, its teachings, the mind of the Spirit in the Scriptures.

Good reading is that which in some considerable measure conveys this meaning to the hearer; nothing more, nothing other.

So misleading and perversive of the truth is a wrong emphasis—to consider this particular element of speech for a moment—that logicians have included in their enumeration of false arguments the *fallacy of accent.* Who can maintain that he has never employed it? In reporting the language of another many persons are conscientious enough not to change the words, who nevertheless take the liberty of making very sensible alterations in the emphasis, the inflections, the tone. But are not these also virtual words, signs of ideas, and often the most significant of all such signs? They are the spirit of the words. May we violate the spirit, provided no violence be done to the form? It is the subtler falsehood of the two. To take just one example out of an innumerable multitude: "He did it *very* well" means that it was done extremely well; while "He did it very *well*" suggests a doubt that it was done even moderately well. Does it make no difference, then, in orally reporting such an assertion, which of the two adverbs shall be emphasized?

Now if we turn to the Bible—or, indeed, to any other book—we can see on every page how vocal misinterpretation may arise. Some Sundays ago I heard a minister read in his Scripture lesson, "For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but after their own lusts shall they heap to themselves teachers having itching ears" (2 Tim. iv. 3), giving the upward inflection to the word *teachers*, and making no pause before the next word; thus implying that the itching ears belonged to the false teachers, and not to the people that set them up and listened to them. If this be not misinterpretation, by what name shall we call it? On the other hand, it is not unusual to hear the downward inflection given to words in which the suspended sense requires the upward, e.g.: "And He opened His mouth and taught them, *saying*," etc., instead

of, "And He opened His mouth and *taught* them, saying," etc. I have heard of a preacher who quoted John iv. 2 as proving that the Twelve were baptized, and were indeed the only persons baptized, by Christ Himself: "Jesus Himself baptized *not but his disciples*." This expositor, it is true, was an uneducated negro, but he is not without numerous fellows, in the matter of expository reading, among those who enjoy higher gifts and opportunities.

Surely it is more than a mere question of taste whether we shall so read the Scriptures to men or not. It is a question of duty, of conscience, of truth.

Nor, as already intimated, is the mere avoidance of such misreading sufficient. Obviously not. A musician may render his piece correctly and yet very poorly; the music within the music may not be heard at all. So with reading. Correctness is negative; there must be the positive excellence and power that may be described, in a single word, as *expression*.

The qualifications are simple and evident, but not such as may be picked up in a day. They are partly physical. The musician should have a good instrument, responsive to his fingers or his breath, else the music in his soul will not find adequate outflow. So with reading. The vocal chords, with the resonant cavities and the differentiating organs,—the whole apparatus of speech,—must be such as can respond with strong, sweet, and flexible voice to the touch of the soul. But the musician is more than the instrument, and so likewise is the soul more than the vocal organs. The *sources* of power in good reading are psychical, not physical. Are the words of Scripture dead on your lips? Inevitably so if they be dead on your soul. Are they present and living words to you? They will not be likely to die on your lips.

Of these sources of power the first is *knowledge*. Could you read the lesson well in Hebrew or Greek, if your acquaintance with the language embraced no more than the pronunciation of the words? Neither can you read it well in English further

than your knowledge of it extends. "Understandest thou what thou readest?" is a doubly appropriate question to one who reads to others. He need not expect them to listen and understand unless he himself be intelligently listening to the author.

If we suppose, e.g., that our Lord, in His conversation with the woman at the well (John iv. 9, 10), is drawing a contrast between the water which He could have given her and that which He asked of her,—the one being *living* water and the other not,—we shall be likely to emphasize the word *living*, and thus misinterpret the passage and mislead the hearer. The true meaning will suggest the true reading: "Thou wouldest have asked of Him, and He would have given *thee* living water." Likewise the words in James iii. 2, "In many things we offend all" (A. V.), will certainly not be read correctly ("In many things we *offend*' — *all*'") if they be understood as meaning that in many things we offend everybody.

Or take one of the divine names as an example. The apostle Paul in two passages, and Luke in one, use the Aramaic word *Abba* for Father, and add the Greek translation, —as if they had said, "Abba, which is, being interpreted, Father." Our translators have transliterated the first word and translated the other, so that we have in our English Bible "Abba, Father." But from inattention to their meaning the words are constantly used as if they constituted one twofold name, as in the familiar line,

"And Father, Abba Father, cry."

And accordingly they are constantly misread, the Aramaic word receiving the upward inflection, with no pause following, instead of the downward inflection followed by a moment's pause, and then the English word in a lower tone of voice.

Now are there any errors into which you personally, through misapprehending the exact meaning of what you read from the

Scriptures to the congregation, are liable to fall? Very many; and I greatly wish that you may take the matter to heart, and find them out for yourselves.

Another qualification is *imaginative realization.* The distant scene or event, with the thrilling experiences that accompanied it, must be imaginatively reproduced, and thus become lifelike and real to the reader, if he would have the inimitable tone of reality and life in his reading.

Still another qualification is *sympathy.* I have had a "muscle reader" take my hand in one of his, go blindfold to any place or person in the room, and lay his other hand on any object, according to my wish. The sense of touch, with no assistance from any other, without a spoken word, was enough. Here was almost preternatural physical sensibility. May we feel an analogous moral and emotional sympathy with the sacred writer whose words are entering our minds from the printed page? Something of it we must have, or else not truly receive his words and communicate them to others. It must not be as if one were telling us some strange thing outside the range of our personal experience and susceptibility. Let the deep and varied human feeling—the reverence, the wonder, the penitence, the consolation, the hope and fear, the holy love to God, the zeal for the salvation of men—that vibrates in these inspired and prophetic pages, awaken some accordant emotion in our own hearts. To read the seventh or the eighth chapter of Romans, for example, unsympathetically is surely *not* to read it.

Then, as regards the preacher's attitude toward the audience, the requisite qualities are *sympathy* and *determination.*

There is a marked difference between reading *before* people and reading *to* them. There must be a distinct sensitiveness to their presence. The reader must stand in some relation of congeniality with his hearers, responding to their touch as he expects them to respond to his. And at the same time the earnest and successful reader exerts his will power upon them.

Through sympathy and obedience he rules them. Becoming their servant, he becomes their master. Not rudely nor in any spirit of self-assertion; gently and wisely; but steadily determining that they shall hear, that they shall be interested; winning his way, willing his words into their minds.

Will not all this require careful premeditation and interested attention to the Scripture lesson? Undoubtedly. And are not these the right habits to form? Can we be faithful to our office as Bible readers in the congregation without them? Is it only the sermon that is to be studied and made a real ministration, the rest of the service being simply its customary accompaniment?

Nor is this all. The minister thus interested in the Scripture lesson, and intent upon communicating it to others, will become a commentator. He will help the expository reading with expository remarks,—a pertinent word of explanation, of illustration, of application, here and there. The English and the Scotch preachers give more attention than those of our own country to this happy art of exposition. Take the Rev. John McNeill of Glasgow as an example. During his recent visit to this country it was said, "He reads the Scriptures with great effect, interspersing pithy and pointed comments as he proceeds." Spurgeon's hearers valued his comments on the lesson hardly less than the preaching. And the secret of the extraordinary interest with which these comments were received is not far to seek. "As a rule," says the great preacher, "I spend much more time over the exposition than over the sermon." A few of our American preachers likewise—Dr. C. F. Deems, for example—are known to have prepared the Scripture lessons no less carefully than the sermon. I believe the result will in every case justify the practice.

Such exposition, indeed, is attended with more than one advantage. Besides its direct effect in enriching the services through the teaching and enforcement of the truth, its tendency is to prevent formalism and a stilted or declamatory style of

pulpit speech. It is an excellent preparative for the delivery of the sermon — the skirmishers' fire before the battle.

True, if the commenting be done as a mere matter of course, it were better omitted. It must come as the fruit of knowledge, sympathy, earnestness of purpose. "Pithy and pointed" it ought to be, by all means. There is no profit in diluting the intense significance of Scripture language with feeble paraphrase or random remark. Do not grudge your very best ideas, illustrative incidents, bits of experience, for this ministration. Plenty of others are available for use in the sermon. Give of your best; it will come back to you enriched and multiplied.

Might it not be well occasionally to make the sermon shorter than usual—say fifteen or twenty minutes in length—and give the time thus saved to the Scripture reading?

Expect your reading, either with or without comment, to do good. Mean it. Mingle it with much unspoken prayer. Have faith in the Word of God to convict, to comfort, to sanctify the souls before you.

I will only add a few miscellaneous hints.

1. The lessons, one or both, may be devotional, without special reference to the subject of the sermon. So far as they are selected for instruction rather than devotion, evidently the closer their relation to the sermon the better.

2. Take the pains necessary to learn the pronunciation of Scripture words, especially of the only class that present any difficulty,—the proper names. If you feel disposed to pass this by as a mere surface matter, remember it is what appears on the surface that is noticed by everybody.

3. Words are often miscalled through inattention. I have recently heard from the pulpit such renderings of Scripture as the following: "When ye come to appear before Me, who hath required this at your hand, to *treat* My courts?" (Isa. i. 12); "After *the* hardness and impenitent heart" (Rom. ii. 5); "And this commandment have we from Him, That he who

loveth God *loveth* his brother also" (1 John iv. 21); "This is the stone which was set at naught of *your* builders, which is become the head of the corner" (Acts iv. 11). They are worthy of mention only as fair examples of a numerous class of faults.

4. Do not allow the division into chapters to prevent unity in your Scripture lessons. I once asked a class on examination for an outline of the Epistle to the Romans, and nearly every one gave it by chapters. There is no such perfection in the chapter division of any book of the Bible as this would imply. The lesson, if intelligently chosen, will sometimes begin in one chapter and end in another. If it should be the tenth chapter of John, e.g., the last three verses of the preceding chapter might well be included, in order to show to what persons and in what connection of thought our Lord is here setting forth the contrast between the hirelings and the true Shepherd. (See also 1 Cor. xii., xiii.)

Likewise the division into verses tends to obscure the sense. It is uniformly appropriate to the subject-matter nowhere except in the Psalms and the Proverbs. But an excellent corrective, the Revised Version, is in your hands.

5. Why take up the Bible and lay it on your lap to find the lessons? It is an awkward and useless habit. Leave the Book on the pulpit-desk, and be willing to stand during the few moments necessary for marking (*not* with a batch of leaves turned down) the places of the selections you have already made and are presently to read.

6. The lessons will generally be of about the same length; but why have them invariably so? If you have read all that is specially suited to your purpose,—though it be only a verse or two,—let that suffice. The single paragraph may sometimes, from its very brevity, make a stronger impression than the whole chapter. In this, as in all things, give free play to the life that is in you, and be not a blind and prosy observer of any forms, even the most approved.

Read "The Public Uses of the Bible," by George M. Stone.

LECTURE III

FORMS OF WORSHIP—THE HYMN

IN the schools of the prophets a prominent subject of instruction was music, vocal and instrumental. For the prophesying of these ministers of the church seems to have been done uniformly with musical accompaniments (1 Sam. x. 5, 6). Indeed, its own form was often that of a song. They "prophesied in giving thanks and praising the Lord."

Christian preaching goes well with worship; it is usually accompanied with the praise of God in song. Hence it behooves the Christian preacher, like the ancient "seer in the words of God," to prepare himself for the ministration of song in the house of the Lord. He ought always to join in the singing; he will find it sometimes a means of usefulness to be able to take the lead; and the general directorship of this, as of all other parts of worship, is intrusted to him. It will either suffer or be purified and ennobled in his hands.

Two things chiefly demand his attention:

I. **The Reading of the Hymn.**

Why should this be done at all? The manner in which it is sometimes done would suggest that it is simply intended to prevent a dead silence while the congregation are "finding the place" in their hymn-books; or perhaps for the sake of an easy mechanical exercise of mind and tongue on the minister's part. But if such be the object silence is preferable.

In fact, the hymn need not always be read. The practice

of reading it originated probably in a lack of hymn-books, formerly greater than now, in the congregation. Let the mere announcement sometimes suffice. It may save time which can be more effectually employed in some other part of the service; e.g., in commenting on the Scripture lesson.

Or the fact that the hymn is usually read before it is sung may be itself a good reason for the occasional omission of the reading—to break a custom that may unconsciously become as binding as a rubric. But the reading is worship,—an appropriation and vocal expression of the hymn, in which minister and people should join,—and passes over insensibly into the more emotional worship of song. The hymn is the utterance of a gifted Christian soul in the rapture, or trembling penitence, or serene and holy trust, of the devotional spirit. The hymn-book is more than a newspaper or a business record, and should be treated accordingly. "What books are those you used this morning in reading the service?" asked Garrick of an English clergyman. "Books! Why, the Bible and Prayer-book." "Ah!" said the painstaking and famous actor, "I observed that you handled them as though they were a ledger and day-book." Shall we be of the number of Christian ministers that handle their hymnal thus?

Note the intense interest with which the elocutionist studies his piece,—even though it be nothing more than a simple lyric poem,—not only for the first reading, but frequently for subsequent occasions. It must enter into his imagination and feeling, so as to become a conscious and vivid reality,—the characters, the scenes, the sentiments,—before ever it can find interpretation in his voice. No matter how perfect his vocal powers, he must *have* it before he can *give* it.

As in the Scripture reading, as in all reading aloud, here is the principal thing: sympathetic realization of the sentiment. Still it is not always sufficient. We are told by Richard Grant White that Tennyson, in reading his own poetry to his friends, spoiled it utterly: "Hearers of intelligence and culture, who

are accustomed to the best English speech and to the best reading, can hardly listen with decorously sober faces as the laureate reads his own verses. His accent is so forced, his inflections are so grotesque, and even his pronunciation becomes so strange, that to most of his hearers (of whom there have not been many) all the charm of his poetry disappears." A similar report has come down to us concerning the poet Thomson's rendering of the "Seasons." The failure in these cases could hardly have been for lack of a correct conception or a present realization of the sentiment.

There may be genuine feeling which, through certain wrong ideas or bad speaking habits, is sadly marred in utterance. And this seems to be peculiarly true of the rendering of lyrical poetry. To render it in speech is harder than in song, because it was made for the latter rather than for the former.

The rhythmic pauses—cesural and final—must always be observed. Nor must the pauses required by the sense or grammar be neglected, else the meaning will be lost. The cesura need never be permitted to interfere with the sense of the verse. Let it fall where the meaning does not forbid; e.g.:

> "Thy praise shall sound | from shore to shore,
> Till moons shall wax and wane | no more."

In the latter of these two lines, if the cesural pause were given after the word *wax* and the grammatical pause omitted after the word *wane*, the meaning would become ridiculous.

But the final pause must be observed for the sake of the rhythm, even though the sense should forbid. In this case, however, a compromise is called for. Let there be a slight pause, the sense yielding a little and the rhythm a little. The following couplet may serve for illustration:

> "And if my sufferings may augment
> Thy praise, behold me well content."

But more specifically. Your feeling as you read the hymn

may be that of solemnity, while your tone has somehow become *doleful;* your feeling may be that of thoughtfulness, your tone *monotonous, recitative;* your feeling that of love and joy, your tone *loud and harsh;* your feeling that of reverence, your tone *indolent and inaudible.*

Can you bear to be told of such faults? Let not the miserable spirit of self-worship blunt the edge of just and kindly criticism. Remember, it is sheer ignorance, or, what is worse, vanity, to imagine that we can read a chapter of the Bible or a hymn of the hymn-book as it should be done, without study and practice. In one way or another we must learn to do it. On no other condition may we hope to attain that unconscious power which is "the lovely result of forgotten toil." It will not come of itself.

Often, however, *the hymn need not be read.*

II. **The Singing.**

Here we shall content ourselves with two inquiries:

1. *Who shall sing?* Not some, but all worshipers, even such as have no "gift" of song. Whether Lowell Mason was right or wrong in his opinion that any one who can speak can sing if he will, there can be no doubt that any one who can speak can take part, if he will, with both heart and voice, and without producing discord, in congregational singing. Good counsel is that of the devout Thomas à Kempis: "If you cannot sing so sweetly as the lark or the nightingale, then sing as the raven, or as the frog in the pool, who sing as God gave them; only do not raise your voice too greatly."

One danger attendant upon non-liturgic worship is that the congregation, having so little appointed them to do, may degenerate into mere listeners and lookers-on. It is desirable to have them share as largely as possible with the officiating minister in the outward expression of worship. For one thing, therefore, let them all unite in the singing.

The Protestant Reformation found no congregational singing in the church. The hymns were in the Latin tongue and were rendered by official chanters and choristers alone. For

hundreds of years no voice save that of the priest and the choir had been lifted up in the praise of God in the congregation. All this was changed. Seven years after the nailing of the Ninety-five Theses on the church door of Wittenberg, Luther began to publish his German hymns. They were rapidly multiplied from his own pen and others. The hymn-book was in the congregation. So the people found a voice in which the long-repressed praises of the Saviour might be uttered without interdict or rebuke. One of the great reformer's opponents said that the hymns of Luther had slain more souls than his writings and declamations. Since then the tide of holy song has ebbed and flowed with the rising or declining life and joy of the church.

But the choir is also in our churches. What may we believe to be the mind of Christ concerning it? The office of the choir is to lead and not to displace congregational singing. Here is our ideal form of congregational worship (Paul prayed that it might be realized by the Christians in Rome): "That with one accord ye may with one mouth glorify the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ" (Rom. xv. 6). It is also true that the almost universal tendency of the church choir is to sing professionally rather than devotionally,—to separate itself from the people, as a candidate for their admiration, instead of maintaining the closest communion with them as fellow-worshipers. Undoubtedly choir-singing, in its effect upon those who really desire to worship God in the service of song, is sometimes nothing else than sorrow of heart; it is so evidently a *performance*.

"When I survey the wondrous cross
On which the Prince of glory died,
My richest gain I count but loss,
And pour contempt on all my pride.
O wondrous cross where Jesus died,
And for my sins was crucified!
My longing eyes I turn to Thee,
Thou blessed Lamb of Calvary!"—

To hear such words sung as a matter of business, or flippantly, or for personal and musical display, apparently without one thrill of devotional fervor, without one tender touch of truth and reality—and our missionaries afar among the temples of idolatry!

The fault is not that it is art. The simplest melody ever written or sung is that. Art is natural. But superficiality is only skimming the surface of nature, and affectation is going directly against it.

Still we are not to speak of sitting silent and listening to a soloist or a choir as worshiping by proxy. For why not make a like assertion concerning leadership in prayer? Who would assert, for example, that reading from the book or repeating from memory the general confession in the office for the Lord's Supper may be true prayer, whereas simply listening to the words of the leader, and responding audibly or inaudibly, is not worship at all? The difference commonly felt to exist between prayer and sacred song in this respect is probably due to the fact that vocal music, unlike public prayer, is an art, everywhere cultivated as such, and usually practised as the excitant of a semi-sensuous pleasure; and therefore, hearing it in church, we are insensibly disposed to regard it as an entertainment to be enjoyed or criticised, not as an act of devotion in which all are expected devoutly to unite. But for this fact it would seem only somewhat less incongruous to have an ungodly person, a mere *performer*, lead in our singing than to have him lead in our prayers. I say "somewhat less incongruous," because the words of the hymn at least are the language of a devout soul, while, in the case of an extemporary prayer, both words and voice are the speaker's.

To hear a gifted singer whose heart God has touched and set aglow with reverence and love in the hour of worship—it is as if some gentle but mighty hand were lifting us heavenward. "I can bring people near to God when I sing," said Jenny Lind, "and when my heart has been right I have tried

to put God first." A good test of Christian simplicity in the forms of worship is the revival of religion, and in the revival the solo has found a place. Is it not in the line of New Testament precedents? (1 Cor. xiv. 26; Col. iii. 16.) Two names will be associated as complementary representatives of Christian evangelism for some years to come,—Moody and *Sankey*.

It was a similar test that proved to a noted missionary to the New Hebrides, John G. Paton, the utility of instrumental music in worship. Speaking of an excited controversy which he had heard in a Presbyterian council over the question of the organ and the hymn, he says: "A trip to the South Seas, and a revelation of how God used the harmonium and the hymn as wings on which the gospel was borne into the homes and hearts of cannibals, would have opened the eyes of many dear fathers and brethren as it had opened mine. No one was once more opposed especially to instrumental music in the worship of God than I had been; but the Lord who made us, and who knows the nature He has given us, had long ago taught me otherwise."

But solo-singing, like choir-singing, as we often hear it, not coming from one who is himself worshiping, is far from being helpful to the worshiper. There must be truth and feeling; and, I may be permitted to add, distinct *enunciation*. The sentiment of the hymn cannot be interpreted and communicated unless it be sung not only in the spirit, but also in recognizable English words. Gounod, the brilliant composer, has even taught that pure diction is the first law of song.

Now is there one in your congregation to whom has been intrusted this power of ministration in song? It may be his pastor's duty to remind him of what reward he shall have and what he shall miss by singing the praises of God, as the Pharisees offered their prayers, that he may have glory of men. But let him sing unto the Lord, "and let all the people say, Amen."

We are not to be satisfied, then, till all who love the Lord unite in the hymn of praise. But if "those refuse to sing who

never knew our God," let it be so. Our first duty is to persuade men to draw near in penitence and make acquaintance with Him. The worst are more than welcome in the congregation. How gladly would we pull down our church edifices and build greater in order to make them room! By every wise and righteous expedient try to interest the whole community both in the preaching and in the worship; but the urging of impenitent men to express contrition for sin or supreme devotion to Christ in a concert of song, when they mean not a word of it all, is not a wise and righteous expedient. Many a profane sea-captain has intermitted his oaths and curses long enough to read prayers for the benefit of crew and passengers on Sunday morning. But none of us would insist that such a man should undertake this service for a Christian congregation, even if it were afloat upon the sea. Are the hymns of the church, then, radically different in significance from its prayers?

Who shall sing? The question cannot be considered apart from the deeper question, What is it to sing in the worship of God? The right answer to the latter would be at the same time an answer to the former question. And this we shall find: while it will be the duty and joy of the whole body of worshipers to lift up their voices together in praise to God, if sometimes one or more devoutly sing while the rest keep silent, all may still be worshiping together.

What if all should seem to have the spirit of worship except him whom we expect more than any other to stand consciously in the divine presence and to "know how men ought to behave themselves in the house of God"? What if he should apparently regard the hymn as of a lower devotional order than the Scripture reading or the prayers? What if he should even degrade it into a mere convenience or means of entertainment? "While the collection is being taken the choir will please favor us with some of their delightful music"; "While we sing the —— hymn those who do not desire to remain to

the communion may retire." Or suppose the preface which he naturally employs in announcing the hymn should be "Please *sing*" instead of "*Let us* sing." For even between these two simple formulas there is an important difference, the former signifying, "I am here to direct," and the latter, "We are all here to worship God together."

One homely caution he may need to observe: to use the voice in singing may weaken it (oftentimes more than one would expect) for preaching, and this it will be his duty to avoid.

2. *What shall we sing?* We have been called unto liberty as to both hymns and tunes. The "Testimony of the United Presbyterian Church" seems at this day strangely out of harmony with the fullness and freedom of Christian feeling, in the declaration that "it is the will of God that the songs contained in the Book of Psalms be sung in His worship, both public and private, to the end of the world, and in singing God's praise these songs shall be employed to the exclusion of the compositions of uninspired men." Even the greatly improved metrical version of psalms that still appears in some hymn-books is probably, upon the whole, an embarrassment rather than an aid to devotion. The criticism of the poet Cowley has not yet become inapplicable: "They are so far from doing justice to David that methinks they revile him worse than Shimei." Let the psalms, when used in worship, be rendered as they are: let them be read or sung as anthems. Why spoil the meaning and melody of an inspired hymn by forcing it into conformity with our modern and occidental forms? As if we were thus preserving the original music of the Hebrew verse! Can we suppose this to be a more acceptable offering to God than the same "God's holy Word in song," gathered from the Psalms and the Gospel, known in the deepest experiences of the Christian poet, and uttered in such language as his own heart and the Spirit of truth have given him?

We may make some such general classification of hymns, according to the predominant character of their contents, as follows: (1) Hymns of devotion, including those of petition, of divine communion, of praise, and of devout meditation; e.g., "Lord, we come before Thee now"; "Jesus, Lover of my soul"; "My God, how wonderful Thou art!" "O Thou God of my salvation"; "God is love; His mercy brightens." (2) Hymns of religious experience and exhortation; e.g., "In evil long I took delight"; "Go, ye messengers of God"; "Come, humble sinner, in whose breast." (3) Hymns of Christian communion, such as "Blest be the tie that binds." (4) Didactic hymns, such as, "What doth the ladder mean?" "Go, preach my gospel, saith the Lord"; "Ah! Lord, with trembling I confess."

A "hymn," strictly speaking, is a song of the heart unto the Lord, and preëminently a song of praise. It might be well to limit the application of the word to such lyrics as these, and to call the others sacred songs. It is undoubtedly well that the "hymn" should have the preference in our selections for public worship, even as it has had the preference in the private devotions of Christians in all ages. What, then, shall we say of singing the invitations of the Gospel and the story of divine life in the soul? Is it not to men that these strains are addressed? True; but to men as our fellow-worshipers, or, at least, as those whom we would gain unto God's service; to men in the spirit of gratitude and prayer to God. So these, too, are songs of Christian love and praise. "Teaching and admonishing *one another* with psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts *unto God*." How naturally all these elements—the adoration of God, communion with one's own heart, Christian communion, and earnest religious appeal to the people—intermingle in one continuous flow of feeling and expression, may be seen both in the Book of Psalms and in the modern hymnal.

As to didactic hymns, and especially those which show

something of an argumentative or a polemic aim, they are gradually and properly suffered to fall into disuse. Not however because of the theology in them, but because of the form it takes,—the reasoning or moralizing. To leave the theology out would be to have nothing but sentimentality, empty and insipid, as the remainder. But the true purpose of a hymn is not to *teach* theology. Its voice is not that of instruction, but that of personal feeling. The theology—the saving truth, the knowledge of God—has entered into the heart, and in the power of the Spirit has wrought there the experience of penitence, of sonship to God, of life eternal; and it is the *emotions* of this life of the soul that strive for expression in poetry and song. Those were devout members of the Church of England, and sincere believers in the Calvinistic theology, who used to sing:

> "To perseverance I agree;
> The thing to me is clear:
> Because the Lord has promised me
> That I shall persevere."

But their devotional life must have persisted in spite of such sacred poetry. In like manner, we can hardly think that missionary zeal or love to God in any form is likely to be increased by singing to Him of

> "That Arab thief, as Satan bold,
> Who quite destroyed Thine Asian fold."

Be a lover of hymns. Let them sing their melodies through your soul and help to make your daily life a song unto the Lord. Know something of their authorship and history. It seems to me that I never sing or hear George Herbert's hymn, "Teach me, my God and King," without feeling the touch of that holy and beautiful life out of which it arose. Nor can I read the hymn "O Thou who camest from above" without remembering that John Wesley said of it, in his old age, that

for many years it had been the best expression he could give of his personal experience. To know whence a hymn comes and what it has been to saintly souls adds to its significance. The desire for such knowledge is indicated in connection with the first, the inspired, hymn-book of the church; that is to say, in the titles affixed to the psalms: "A Psalm of David, when he was in the wilderness of Judah," "Michtam of David, when the Philistines took him in Gath," "A Psalm of Asaph," "A Prayer of Moses, the man of God," and so on. The devout and reverent transcribers of the psalms desired to know and to tell others in what circumstances they were written. Will it not be so with reference to the hymns we sing in Christian worship, if we really love them?

When Reginald Heber, a young English clergyman, was visiting his father-in-law, who was also a minister of the Church of England, he was incidentally requested by the latter to write something that could be sung in connection with a missionary sermon to be preached the next day. Heber retired to a corner of the little parlor in which they were sitting, and wrote, in accordance with this unexpected request, the first three stanzas of "From Greenland's icy mountains," and a few minutes afterward added the fourth stanza. "It was printed that evening, and sung the next day by the people of Wrexham church." Does it not make our great missionary hymn still more inspiring to know that it seemed thus to have been given, with no labored effort of composition, to its author, and through him to the church of God?

In the year 1772 the Rev. John Fawcett, the beloved pastor of a Baptist congregation, a poor and scattered flock at Wainsgate, England, accepted a call to a large city congregation. His goods were packed up and the wagons were ready to start for London. But his people, who had come to bid him farewell, could not keep back their grief at the thought of losing a pastor whom they held so dear, and begged him with tears not to leave them. It was more than he could bear. "You

may unpack my goods," he said, "and we will live for the Lord lovingly together." And then it was that he wrote:

> "Blest be the tie that binds
> Our hearts in Christian love."

The sweet familiar words gain a deepened significance when we have learned the experience of Christlike sympathy and love out of which they were born.

If we turn the pages of any good book of hymnology, such as Duffield's "English Hymns" or Butterworth's "Story of the Hymns," we shall find many notes, literary and biographical, to show whence and how our words of holy song have come. Love will prompt us to seek this knowledge, and the knowledge will react to the increase of love.

Jesus came into the world with a multitudinous song of glory and of peace, and each new era of spiritual life in the church finds a fitting emotional expression in a new outburst of sacred music. The hymns of one age, whatever their merits, are not necessarily the hymns of some other age, though the same great *Gloria in Excelsis* may be heard in them all. Those of the Lollards would not have suited the Scotch Covenanters; nor would the hymns of the Covenanters have been the best vehicle of praise for those early Methodists through whose revival singing "a new musical impulse"—as Green, the English historian, has said—"was aroused in the people, which gradually changed the face of public devotion throughout England." Some Latin hymns of the medieval ages are in our hymn-books still, and are not likely soon to become antiquated. Such are the *Veni, Sancte Spiritus*—

> "Come, Holy Ghost, in love,
> Shed on us from above
> Thine own bright ray"—

written, it is supposed, by King Robert II. of France (d. 1031), himself a singer in the choir of his church, and the gentlest of

monarchs; the "Jerusalem, the golden" of Bernard of Cluny (b. about 1150); the *Dies Iræ* of Thomas of Celano (d. about 1250), "whose triple rhyme, as with three hammer-strokes, makes the depths of the soul to tremble"; and those tender and mystic strains that sink into our hearts from the convent of Clairvaux:

"Jesus, the very thought of Thee
With sweetness fills the breast;
But sweeter far Thy face to see,
And in Thy presence rest.

"Nor voice can sing, nor heart can frame,
Nor can the memory find
A sweeter sound than Thy blest name,
O Saviour of mankind.

"O Hope of every contrite heart,
O Joy of all the meek,
To those who ask, how kind Thou art!
How good to those who seek!"

But only an antiquary could wish by the use of these, or any of their successors in the intervening centuries, to repress the outflow of "Gospel hymns" in our day. Retaining what we will of the old, let us always be ready to "sing unto the Lord a *new song*."

Similarly each stage of individual culture, mental and spiritual, must be allowed to sing its own hymns, even as it must offer its own prayers and do its own work—always within the limits of Christian knowledge and experience. To many of us a mere ditty, with its crude and barren repetitions, is neither tasteful nor reverent; but there is no need of our being scandalized at finding one or two in the hymn-book. Such effusions as "I'm bound for the land of Canaan," "Oh, you must be a lover of the Lord," and the once popular "Oh, what ship is this that will take us all home?" are to many persons an appropriate expression of devotional feeling. Most of Keble's hymns would be meaningless to the Salvation Army; and think

of Keble singing some of theirs! The church organ and the anthem are good in their place, but so also is the Sunday-school song.

There are many and diverse manifestations of the selfsame divine Spirit. Let us thank God for all His children through whom it has pleased Him to give us this ministration of devotional song, from Whittier, the Quaker poet, to Faber, the devout Roman Catholic. In one of his narratives of religious work among the Indians, Bishop Whipple tells of the translation of certain favorite hymns into the Indian tongue; and some of them are these: "Nearer, my God, to Thee," "Sun of my soul, Thou Saviour dear," "Lead, kindly Light," "Jesus, Lover of my soul." The selections doubtless were made with reference to character rather than to authorship, but this makes their catholicity more suggestive—Unitarian, Episcopalian, Roman Catholic, Methodist. Or, to take a more pronounced example, Augustus Toplady was converted, when a youth of sixteen, under the preaching of an illiterate Methodist, and yet he believed Arminianism to be a rationalizing theology whose success would be destructive to the Gospel. The language he employs in his controversial writings on this subject is violent and abusive in the extreme. Nevertheless, the true faith of his heart, deeper than all the forms of his thought, was the same as that of the fellow-Christians whom he so grievously misapprehended, and it was only out of this faith that there could arise the spirit of joy and praise. So Toplady's glorious hymn, "Rock of Ages, cleft for me," dwells upon the lips of all evangelical Christians, far more of whom now reject his theologizing than accept it. Next to the Bible, the hymnal that any church puts into the hands of its people should make them feel and confess, "I believe in the church of God, the *communion of saints*."

The history of the English hymn-book is comparatively brief. It began with Tate and Brady's metrical version of the Psalms, together with which were published seventy-four

hymns, about two hundred years ago. In the year 1719 the "Psalms and Hymns" of Isaac Watts made their appearance, and marked the real beginning of the general and delighted use of the hymn-book among English-speaking Christians.

Moreover, it is a matter of gratitude that our Christian hymnology has grown better from generation to generation; but not a matter of surprise, for do we not both live in the present and inherit the past? Still the need of improvement remains. We are now singing a good many feeble lines, inherited and original. Wesley said, in his preface to the Methodist hymn-book, published in 1780, that in it there were "no doggerel, no blotches, nothing put in to patch up the rhyme, no feeble expletives." He felt prepared also to make an equally strong claim for its positive merits. Alas! for the trustworthiness of human judgment concerning that which is one's own. The book was a long step in advance, but even the negative perfection supposed to be realized in it is still serving, after the lapse of a hundred years as an ideal.

Let us not be over-critical. Especially let us not be so *un*-critical as to have a keen eye for blemishes and a dull eye for that which is beautiful and good. But the good can be fully known and appreciated only when there is some sensitiveness to its opposite. Therefore, while declining the *rôle* of the fault-finder, we may notice faults as well as excellences.

It is not extremely often that the worshiper has occasion to be disturbed in mind by *objectionable sentiment* in our familiar hymns; but here and there it occurs, as the following examples show:

> "Oh, would He more of heaven bestow,
> And let the vessels break,
> And let our ransomed spirits go
> To grasp the God we seek."

> "If e'er my heart forget
> Her welfare or her woe,

Let every joy this heart forsake,
And every grief o'erflow."

"O drive these dark clouds from my sky,
Thy soul-cheering presence restore,
Or take me to Thee up on high,
Where winter and clouds are no more."

The good taste and reverent feeling of the present day have discarded most of the amatory or fondling expressions which were not uncommon in the hymns of the last century; but traces of these still remain, in such lines, e.g., as the following:

"If Thou, my Jesus, still be nigh."

"My Lord, my Love, is crucified."

"And midst the embraces of Thy love
He felt compassion rise."

"Then speechless clasp Thee in my arms,
The antidote of death."

"Dear Saviour, let Thy beauties be
My soul's eternal food."

Less infrequent is *extravagant* or *confused* or *tasteless imagery*, as in the following examples:

"Quench all his fiery darts and chase
The fiend to his own hell."

"Come, Thou Fount of every blessing,
Tune my heart to sing Thy praise."

"Teach me some melodious sonnet,
Sung by flaming tongues above;
Praise the Mount,—I'm fixed upon it,—
Mount of Thy redeeming love."

"Concealed in the cleft of Thy side."

"Five bleeding wounds He bears,
Received on Calvary."

"Earth from afar hath heard Thy fame,
And worms have learned to lisp Thy name."

"The Lord shall in your front appear,
And lead the pompous triumph on."

"High o'er the angelic bands He rears
His once dishonored head."

"I rode on the sky
(Freely justified I!),
Nor envied Elijah his seat;
My soul mounted higher
In a chariot of fire,
And the moon it was under my feet."

"This robe of flesh I'll drop, and rise
To seize the everlasting prize;
And shout while passing through the air,
'Farewell, farewell, sweet hour of prayer.'"

There are also prose prayers in our hymn-books, such as:

"Thy presence, gracious Lord, afford;
Prepare us to receive Thy word";

and prose thanksgivings, such as:

"Blest be our everlasting Lord,
Our Father, God, and King";

and prose meditations, such as:

"Religion is the chief concern
Of mortals here below."

These are pious sentiments wrought into lyric form, though the indefinable spirit of imaginative sweetness and beauty is not in them.

We are not to suppose, however, that the hymn which contains the finest poetic thought is necessarily the finest hymn. Probably no greater hymnist than Charles Wesley has yet been given to the church, but a great poet he certainly was not. Many of our hymns have more prose than poetry in them; but those which, by common consent and common use, are acknowledged to be the best, whether poetical or not, will be found to have certain other characteristics. They are dis-

tinctly *emotional;* they thrill with the *spirit of devotion;* they spontaneously flow out into *song*, rhythmic, musical, uplifting; they express some *common feeling* of Christian worshipers, and not a peculiar or individual phase of experience; their language and imagery are *easily understood.* "Lead, kindly Light," is more poetical and more pathetic than "Guide me, O Thou great Jehovah"; in private devotion it would sink much deeper into many minds, but in the congregation the other will always be preferred. I have sometimes announced those exquisite lines of Whittier,

> "It may not be our lot to wield
> The sickle in the ripened field,"—

but never without feeling, somehow, before the singing was ended, that the people were trying to sing poetry instead of spontaneously singing a song. Not that the finely poetic hymns are never to be used in the congregation. Let us have them in the hymn-book, and let us use them both in public and in private; but intelligently.

In our hymn studies even the mechanism of verse—its measures, rhymes, and stanzas, with the technical names which designate them—is not to be despised. It is well enough to know the difference between an iambus and a trochee, between primary and secondary feet, between a verse and a stanza. And if your ear is not offended by bad rhymes,—such as "bar" and "here," "sins" and "kings," "dreams" and "intervenes," "mansions" and "transient,"—it can hardly be very sensitive, on the other hand, to good rhymes.

The selection of suitable hymns for the various occasions of congregational worship, though not a difficult duty, is often ill done. Should not the first hymn be distinctively devotional? Should it ever be an exhortation to the ungodly? The hymn after preaching may properly be expressive of the emotions which the sermon is expected to excite, or, as we commonly phrase it, "on the same subject" as the sermon. The "inter-

mediate" hymn may be intermediate in character as well as in position.

We are apt to have favorite hymns, and are undoubtedly entitled to them. But remember you are not ministering exclusively to persons of the same temperament, tastes, and religious development as your own. Try to offer each his "portion of food in due season." Know the *hymn-book*, not merely a few familiar hymns; know the people, not merely a few friends like-minded with yourself; and make the most of the whole book in the interest of the whole congregation.

Read Duffield's "English Hymns."

LECTURE IV

FORMS OF WORSHIP—THE PRAYERS

STANDING in the presence of God and of the congregation, we speak to them as His messengers. Kneeling in the same divine and human presence, we speak to God as the representatives of the people.

Was it true only of the temple that the house of God shall be called a house of prayer? Shall our houses of worship be only subordinately houses of *worship*, because they are also preaching-places? The temple was a place of instruction (Luke ii. 46; John vii. 14), but predominantly of prayer; the synagogue was a place of prayer, but predominantly of instruction. Let the Christian church edifice become both temple and synagogue: let prayer and preaching be equally characteristic of its services. Indeed, preaching is itself devotional, —kindling mind and heart with the thought of God and the sense of His presence. Many a sermon, with no great change of its phraseology, might serve as a devout meditation or be sung as a hymn. But the supreme act of worship is prayer, and the highest form of prayer, as we have already seen, is not the reading of a liturgy, but the utterance of one's own words, with the ability which God giveth, under the pressure of present spiritual need and aspiration. We can hardly think of such a mode of worship in any other than a Christian congregation, and we are unwilling to think of it as excluded therefrom. It may be forbidden, but will persist in claiming

its place as one chief form of expression in the "religion of the Word."

Many, it is true, do not attend church for prayer. To come in after the "*introductory* exercises" is unobjectionable to them. "I'll be there in time for the sermon," is sometimes said, and is often doubtless the unspoken preference. But remember there are others who really desire to pray and who need help therein. We, their ministers, are sent to help them, —to be the interpreters and utterers, in Christ's name, of their inmost souls before God. Man is sometimes called the priest of nature, because the whole material creation may be said to find articulate expression in him. When the psalmist sang:

> "Praise ye the Lord. . . .
> Praise ye Him, sun and moon:
> Praise Him, all ye stars of light. . . .
> Praise the Lord from the earth,
> Ye dragons, and all deeps:
> Fire and hail, snow and vapor;
> Stormy wind, fulfilling His word:
> Mountains and all hills;
> Fruitful trees and all cedars:
> Beasts and all cattle;
> Creeping things and flying fowl,"—

he was himself praising God in behalf of the speechless earth and sky, which Paul afterward saw waiting and longing for their redemption. Similarly is the minister the priest of his people. What is the charm and power of poetry? Is it not that the poet feels more deeply certain ideas, emotions, ideals, that we have all felt in some measure, and expresses them as we could not? In our stammering and dumbness the chosen poet is a voice for us. So is the minister to like-minded souls in public prayer. Others also, as they listen, may feel that it must be a good thing thus to draw near to God, and so will the devotional spirit be awakened in their hearts. Such a minister, even while kneeling in the pulpit, is a pastor indeed, leading his flock directly to the Fountain of living waters.

But suppose the devout souls in the congregation have no help from their leader. Suppose that, on the contrary, an effort be necessary to prevent being chilled by his coldness, or pained by his flippancy, or distracted by his wandering words, or, what is more probable, stupefied by a "slow, mechanic exercise." Surely he is not likely to preach with power, not having himself laid hold of the power of God in communion with Him.

But, whatever the sermon may be, it cannot substitute the prayer. In preaching we look into the faces of our hearers and they into ours. But prayer demands another and an equally symbolic act,—the closing of the eye. It means that we have shut out the world of sense and are looking otherwhere. The act itself is an appeal to Heaven:

> "So much the rather Thou, celestial Light,
> Shine inward, and the mind through all her powers irradiate."

Do we expect any sermon to take the place of this uplooking to God?

Your imagination has been excited at the thought of becoming an effective preacher, of swaying a congregation "by the word of truth, by the power of God, by the armor of righteousness, on the right hand and on the left." But how often have you longed with inexpressible desire for the gift of prayer? How much pains have you taken to stir up this gift in you? How many times have you cried, "Oh that I could so pray with my congregation—so appropriately, comprehensibly, tenderly, earnestly, trustfully—as to unite all believing hearts at the feet of Him who, being the Inspirer, must be also the Hearer of prayer, and to call down the fullness of His blessing upon them"?

There must be preparation; and the essential preparation is not specific, but *general*. It is in the whole course and conduct of life, in personal character and experience. How do we pray in the congregation? It depends first of all upon who

we are. What manner of man is it that is praying? What are his habitual thoughts and feelings? What does he know about God's love and will and service? What affluence of nature has he? What power of the Spirit in his heart and life? Pulpit prayer is only a fruitful bough from the hidden roots of secret devotion and of all daily nearness and obedience to God.

Do we want to pray? Are we sometimes hungry for communion with the Father of spirits? From the troubles that oppress and the mysteries that perplex and the sins that make the conscience ache, do we flee to Him as our refuge and Saviour? Do we find a sweet relief, an inexpressible, holy joy, an unfathomable peace, in talking with God? Besides all this, are we in sympathy with men, so as to feel their joys and sorrows, their longings, their necessities and burdens, in our own hearts? Then we can pray in the congregation. Not, perhaps, with the fluency of some; but if the spirit of adoring love and fervent supplication breathe in our broken utterances, it will be felt by them that hear, and the gift of prayer, like all others, will improve through use. "If ye abide in Me, and My words abide in you, ye shall ask what ye will, and it shall be done unto you:" this is our Lord's statement of the gracious and irreversible conditions of successful asking at the hand of the infinite Giver.

Upon our knees at the beginning of the still hour of devotion we may ask, "Lord, teach us to pray." But the whole answer will not be given immediately. For here is one of those lessons that God is teaching us, if we be willing, every day and everywhere in life. Men pass through life and learn many things. Some learn the secret of the Lord, learn so to call upon His name as to receive the answer of peace. If we have the commandments of Christ and keep them, abiding in Him, the divine instinct of prayer will find its true and constant expression. And in the house of the Lord, through our praying will prayer be multiplied. Others will share in the

praises and petitions we offer, and find it easier to come to the God of all grace.

It will quicken both the spirit and the gift of prayer to ponder the devotional language of others. How much of it there is in the Bible! Read and assimilate spiritually these prayers of God's children in former days,—of psalmists, prophets, apostles,—and let them become, as they will oftentimes, the spontaneous vehicle of your own heart's desire before God. Note the deep devotional language in the Epistles. Paul not only speaks of his prayers for the Christian congregation, but sometimes gives them (Eph. i. 16–23; iii. 14–21; Phil. i. 9–11). We may take into our hearts also the very prayers of Jesus,—not only the one which He taught His disciples to say, but His own recorded words of communion with the Father,—and may seek to know more and more of the filial love and trust of Him whom the Father hears always (Matt. xi. 25, 26; xxvi. 36–42; Luke xxiii. 34, 46; John xi. 41, 42; xii. 27, 28; xvii.).

Books of devotion are helpful. Many published prayers are worthy of repeated reading and meditation,—such, for example, as those of Jay, Beecher, and Dr. Joseph Parker. They enlarge our views of the possibilities of converse with God, shaming the barren generality of our own requests and the meagerness of our acknowledgment of the divine goodness, helping us to interpret and express the multiplicity of human needs, deepening our sense of the nearness of God and of that abounding tender mercy that makes all our wants His care.

But there should be *specific* preparation for prayer in the pulpit. And here an objection, oftener vaguely felt than distinctly urged, may receive a moment's notice: "Real prayer is inspired by the Holy Spirit, and a prepared prayer cannot have this inspiration." But while the first of these two propositions is a great truth, the other is manifestly erroneous. Is not the real sermon, likewise, the word of God through the Spirit? And yet think of the hours of thought expended

upon the preparation to preach! May we not have the presence of the Holy Spirit preparing us to pour out the whole thought of our heart before God as well as in the act itself? Indeed, as a preparation for private prayer it is profitable to employ a short time in gathering up our thoughts, saying within ourselves, "What shall I ask of the Lord? what shall I praise Him for? what is in my heart to utter before Him now?" "Continue steadfastly in prayer, *watching therein* with thanksgiving; withal praying for us also, that God may open unto us a door for the word" (Col. iv. 2, 3). Much more is this important when our voice is the voice of many others at the throne of grace.

I believe that the good effects of such instruction as the following, in the Presbyterian "Directory of Worship," may be widely seen in the pulpits of that church: "We think it necessary to observe that, although we do not approve, as is well known, of confining ministers to set or fixed forms of prayer for public worship, yet it is the indispensable duty of every minister, previously to entering upon his office, to prepare and qualify himself for this part of his duty as well as for preaching. He ought, by a thorough acquaintance with the holy Scriptures, by reading the best writers on the subject, by meditation, and by a life of communion with God in secret, to endeavor to acquire both the spirit and the gift of prayer. Not only so, but when he is to enter on particular acts of worship he should endeavor to compose his spirit and to digest his thought for prayer."

It is well to write prayers, though not with the intention of repeating them. Dr. Chalmers is said to have sometimes written and memorized his pulpit prayers. But simple premeditation of mind and heart is undoubtedly the better way. Think upon the revelation of God in Christ; take in the occasion; consider the souls that are soon to appear before you, and others whom the church should remember in the heavenly Father's presence. Do not give your strength ungrudgingly

to the composition of the sermon, and feel that as to worship an impromptu utterance is good enough. Both your congregation and yourself will suffer from this, as from all other forms of prayerlessness.

I have heard a young preacher say, "My mind is so occupied with my sermon up to the very moment of entering the pulpit, that I am unprepared to pray." But how much experience is required to prove that in such a case he must also have been unprepared to preach? More than one blessing waits upon the doing of the right; and time given to needful preparing for the ministry of worship will add power to the preaching,—will be the best possible preparation of the sermon. Even if it were not so, on what plea could we justify the neglect of one such duty of our office in the interest of another? Rather let us resolve, with the apostles in Jerusalem, to "give ourselves continually to *prayer*, and to the ministry of the *word*."

And now what kind of prayer is it toward which this devotional preparation should be directed? What elements of truth and power in this part of our life and ministry shall be emphasized?

1. *Reality*. Do not speak of this prayer as a "pulpit performance" or as an "address to the throne of grace." Such are not the biblical descriptive terms: "He that *cometh to God*"; "*Ask*, and ye shall receive"; "*Pour out your heart* before Him"; "In the morning will I direct my prayer unto Thee, and will *look up*." Nothing official or artificial, but, like all worship, simple, natural, genuine, must be the prayer before the congregation.

True, it is common prayer; yours, indeed, but not yours alone. Distinctively individual requests are here out of place. Whatever your own trials, joys, hopes, perplexities, necessities, they are all to be merged in those of the men and women in whose presence and in whose behalf you are making request and offering praise. None the less, however, may you come

to God sincerely and heartily; not otherwise, indeed, can we come at all.

Avoid the use of favorite phrases and all repetition by rote. "Bless the poor and the needy, the sick and the afflicted, the distressed and the oppressed everywhere:" there is a rhythm in this sentence that has given it wide acceptability, but in most of our congregations it is now dead upon lips and ears. So with many other current formulas, such as: "through dangers seen and unseen"; "make our peace with Thee, our calling and our election sure"; "Thou canst not look upon sin with the least degree of allowance"; "enough, come up higher"; "in the capacity of a prayer-meeting"; "duties devolving upon us"; "this, Thine earthly sanctuary"; "which the world can neither give nor take away"; "no visible mark of Thy displeasure resting upon us"; "we have raised the puny arm of rebellion against Thee"; "the last and the least remains of the carnal mind"; "in health and strength, with the right use of our reason, while others are racked with pain or scorched with fever." No matter how significant some of these expressions may be in themselves, they are empty of meaning to us when merely echoed from some other person's lips or from our own in the past. Think of them off your knees, and get command of equivalent or similar expressions. It is not a difficult matter.

The same may be said of Scripture quotations. Have you only a few of the most familiar at command? Is it your habit to repeat certain passages over and over? Get possession of others. Find them for yourself by a sympathetic perusal of the Scriptures, and let them become, through personal appropriation, a part of your own soul's speech, fresh and vital.

Avoid extravagance of language. "We are *profoundly* grateful to Thee:" is that really our meaning, or do we simply mean that we are grateful, or that we *ought to be* profoundly grateful? Let us try to speak the truth in prayer as well as in all human intercourse.

Consider the significance of the names by which God has been pleased to make Himself known to us in the Scriptures. Each offers its own contribution to our knowledge of the infinite riches and glory of the Godhead. Do we truly receive these supreme words of revelation? Then we shall not mechanically repeat some one or two of them. Though it should be the name of which all the others may be regarded as partial and preliminary expressions, "Our Father who art in heaven," even this highest revelation of God may become, through constant and unmeaning repetition, a form of words only. Does not the example of our Lord offer its lesson here also to those who would be taught of Him? For although the name "Father" is that by which the beloved Son came to God in His life on earth, yet with this name other words are joined,—"holy Father," "righteous Father," "Lord of heaven and earth."

Not only are these names significant in themselves, but we should consider their significance with respect to the particular request or thanksgiving in which they are used. Note the defect in such petitions as the following: "Almighty God, search our hearts and reveal us to ourselves, for Thou knowest, as we know not, our innermost thoughts and motives"; "O Thou all-wise God, strengthen us and uphold us by the right hand of Thy power."

Now that which finds the ear of God is, indeed, the voice of the heart, and no mere sounds from the lips. But for the very purpose of avoiding artificiality, and stirring up the heart to speak through the words in simplicity and godly sincerity, must we endeavor to use the appropriate word; and, above all, in naming the name of God.

2. *Reverence.* Remember where you are and what you are undertaking to do. Jesus said, "When ye pray, say, Our Father which art in heaven, *Hallowed be Thy name.*" But some of us speak to Him in a manner less reverent than the manner of our approach to many of our fellow-men. Do we

close the eye in prayer? We also *bend the knee.* "His voice," says George Herbert of the "parson praying," "is treatable and slow, yet not so slow neither as to let the fervency of the supplicant hang and die between speaking; but with a grave liveliness, between fear and zeal, pausing, yet pressing, he performs his duty." A prayer of Austin Phelps has been described as suggesting, "as a suitable setting, a cathedral on the shore of a silent river, with the twilight and the bowed heads of the worshiping congregation, and the soft breathing of adoration," such was its "reverence and beauty." Here was moral reverence in connection with the finest literary gifts and culture. But it has no peculiar affinity with such associations. The prayer of the most unlettered man may be tremulous with this same spirit.

The too frequent utterance of the name of God in prayer is irreverent. Better hesitate and stammer, better be silent, than thus to take the name of the Lord in vain, uttering it for lack of some other word.

The use of "you"—the polite form of the pronoun of the second person—*instead of "thou"* is painfully out of place in prayer. How can any one suppose it to express the true feeling of reverent and gladsome worship?

Amatory words, such as "dear Father," "sweet Jesus," "my Jesus," are lacking in reverence. The psalmists did not use them, nor Isaiah, nor Paul, nor our Lord; and surely we can have no better examples to follow. One can imagine certain moods of genuine emotion that might seem to call for such expressions, but how often are these moods experienced? Childlike trustfulness toward the Father who is in heaven, whole-hearted love to Him, is not fondness and unseemly familiarity. Is there not always intermingled with it a spirit of holy and loving awe? "Some will probably think," says Wesley, in his sermon on "Knowing Christ after the Flesh," "that I have been over-scrupulous with regard to one particular word, which I never use myself either in verse or prose,

in praying or preaching, though it is very frequently used by modern divines, both of the Romish and reformed churches. It is the word *dear*. Many of these say, both in preaching, in prayer, and in giving thanks, 'Dear Lord' or 'Dear Saviour'; and my brother used the same in many of his hymns even as long as he lived." I do not think Wesley was "over-scrupulous."

Praying at the congregation—in other words, preaching to them on our knees, with our eyes shut—is shamefully irreverent. It is offering instruction, or appeal, or reproof, or commendation, or even flattery, to men, while pretending to offer supplication and adoring gratitude to God.

Rhetorical finery is irreverent. Surely the most inappropriate of all places for its employment is that holy of holies, the place of communion with the Lord. Not that imaginative language, even the most beautiful or sublime, must needs be rejected. This may be, as in the Scriptures, the most perfect form of expression for feelings entirely consistent with the deepest reverence. Expression is not display.

Speaking of God, instead of to Him, in prayer is irreverent. "Will the Lord bless His people to-day?" "We come to worship God"; "We pray that God may be pleased to honor His word with success"; —to whom are we saying these things? If to the congregation, the language is quite appropriate: it is spoken *of* our Father in heaven. Rest assured, there are devout minds that cannot pray such prayers, and so, instead of leading them, we stand in their way to obstruct and confuse. Probably the habit was begun through the prayer we were taught to offer in childhood:

> "Now I lay me down to sleep;
> I pray *the Lord* my soul to keep."

The author of the sweet familiar words probably wrote, "I pray Thee, Lord," but usually it has not been so delivered to us.

A violent tone and manner in prayer is irreverent. All screaming, declamation, hurried and precipitate utterance, meaningless gesticulation, are painfully out of place. Let the tone of voice be not, indeed, monotonous (as though there were anything reverential in a sleep-inducing murmur), but devoutly earnest, tender, imploring,—"with a grave liveliness, pausing, yet pressing."

A careless or hasty manner of closing our prayers is irreverent. Sometimes the "Amen" is said with an apparent sense of relief, and at the same time perhaps the minister is rising to begin some other part of the service. Better linger one silent, sacred moment on our knees. The Jewish doctors laid down three rules for pronouncing the "Amen" in the synagogue: "(1) That it be not pronounced too hastily and swiftly, but with a grave and distinct voice; (2) that it be not louder than the tone of him that blessed; (3) that it be expressed in faith, with a certain persuasion that God would bless them and hear their prayer." Is there not something for Christian edification in these ancient rules of worship?

In like manner, when the benediction is pronounced, let there be a moment of silent, prayerful response in the congregation. Then let them quietly disperse. It is the custom in the Episcopal Church, and is worthy of universal observance.

Reverence will seek to express itself, among other modes, in some symbolic attitude,—such as standing, bowing, kneeling, prostration. Sitting expresses no reverence, and is not a devotional attitude, either in prayer or praise. Nor is it so regarded except, by many persons, *in church*. In private or family prayer it seems never to be practised, except in the case of physical infirmity.

Church architecture and furnishing are sometimes at fault. Ought not every church in which worshipers are expected to kneel in prayer to have the pews a suitable distance apart, and to be provided with kneeling-stools, so that without con-

fusion or inconvenience the congregation may unite in the prayer, "all devoutly kneeling"?

3. *Explicitness.* Asking is a very definite act, unfavorable to verbiage and vagueness.

But there are two cautions to be observed: first, prayer is not mere asking, not by any means a simple series of petitions; it is communion with God, and therefore calls for a certain fullness of speech. The collect is not its only proper form of expression. Take the psalms as examples, and our Lord's prayer on the night before His crucifixion. Secondly, in public prayer there may be too great minuteness. Of course cases occur that should be particularized; but do not describe every case of sickness or other trouble in your congregation so circumstantially as to make known to everybody the person whom you have in mind. The effect of this would be distracting rather than devotional. "I cannot tell you any news," said a lady to a friend whom she met at noon on Sunday, "for I was not at church. I did not hear my pastor's prayer, and so do not know who is sick or about to leave town."

Nor is it expedient to make yourself a subject of public prayer. Many will pray for you on entering church, and you will pray for yourself; let this suffice.

4. *Sympathy with our fellow-men.* If we pray for ourselves in a spirit of enmity toward others, God will not hear us (Mark xi. 25, 26). Surely, then, we cannot hope that our prayers for others will be availing if we be not united with them in sympathy and love. Yet such a spirit is not always shown. "Not once, but many a time," says Dr. Stalker, "I have heard a minister on the Sabbath morning, when he rose up and began to pray, plunging at once into a theological meditation; and in all the prayers of the forenoon there would scarcely be a single sentence making reference to the life of the people during the week. Had you been a stranger alighted from another planet, you would never have dreamed that the human beings assembled there had been toiling, rejoicing, and sor-

rowing for six days; that they had mercies to give thanks for and sins to be forgiven; or that they had children at home to pray for, and sons across the sea."

Faith in God and Christlike love to our fellows is the spirit of true intercession. The sense of one's individuality should be well-nigh lost in the realization of the brotherhood of souls.

5. *Order.* How hard are many prayers to follow! They ramble aimlessly. Petition, thanksgiving, confession, adoration, all commingled and repeated over and over; no method, no progress. How much better to have a place in our prayer for confession, a place for thanksgiving, and so on; not to be observed, of course, with mechanical precision, but as a general guide. Is this unscriptural? Will it check the spirit of devotion? Just the opposite. It will help us to utter all that is in our hearts, and nothing else.

Note the order of the Lord's Prayer: the first three petitions relating to God,—to the hallowing of His name, the establishment of His kingdom, the doing of His will; the remaining four relating to ourselves,—to our need of daily food, of forgiveness, of merciful guidance, of deliverance from evil.

Let me suggest the following as an order of topics for the prayer before sermon, to be changed or modified constantly, according to one's judgment: *invocation*, *adoration*, *thanksgiving*, *confession*, *petition*, *consecration*. Each of these themes, moreover, is susceptible of numerous subdivisions which it would be well for you to make for yourselves.

If you will take the pains to seek out appropriate Scripture passages and associate them with such topics, it will further help to furnish you for this ministration of prayer. Nowhere are the very words of Scripture more fitting and expressive than in holy converse with God.

Look also to the hymns and Scripture lessons for suggestions. But no matter whence the topics and their order come, let it be your habit to observe an order, to pass from topic to topic

in leading the devotions of the congregation,—always in the spirit of Christian liberty.

I need hardly add that in any one prayer a few topics only can be embraced. And a danger to be constantly guarded against is that of too great length, either from introducing an undue number of topics, or from dwelling too long on some of them. Are not six or eight minutes ordinarily long enough? At one or both of two things you will probably be surprised when first brought to realize them,—the excessive length of your prayers, and the large amount of verbiage in them. "Be the reason what it may," says Dr. Ebenezer Porter, "the fact is beyond doubt that no man is conscious of his own length in prayer." Still no three-minute rule, nor any other time measure, can here be rigidly applied. There has been given us liberty of prophesying; yet the spirit of the prophets must be subject to the prophets, both in preaching and in prayer.

Premeditation will tend of itself to promote brevity, as in the similar case of preparation to preach, because not so much time will be occupied in finding one's way; the heart will be engaged from the first; the "musing" will have caused the fire to burn.

As to the Concluding Prayer, two characteristic qualities may be noted: it should be *brief* and *sympathetic with the substance and spirit of the sermon*, even as all public prayers ought to have relation to the circumstances that give occasion for them.

And now I have ventured to offer instruction on a delicate and difficult theme. Who would be willing to bear the name of a critic of the soul's converse with God? Nevertheless, prayer, like preaching, has not only its divine, but its human element; and the latter, like all things human, is beset with errors which are properly subjected to criticism and correction. Your body is not too sacred for the surgeon's knife when some rapacious tumor is burrowing in the flesh.

But chiefly will there be needed in this ministration—may we never forget it!—the gracious quickening power of the Holy Spirit. Often you will kneel in the presence of a cold and inert congregation. Little help will be received from them; but your commission, remember, is to *give* help,—not to be ministered unto, but to minister. Be independent of the people, and at the same time in heartfelt sympathy with them, that you may indeed become their helpers. It will not be in vain. Ere long a new sense of the divine presence will come to many; the hidden springs of devout feeling will be touched; there will be less coldness and abstraction of mind, more of faith and its blessed effects. Of Robert Murray McCheyne it was said: "In his prayers he held such reverential and endearing communion with God—he pressed so near the throne, there was something so filial in his 'Abba, Father,' so express and urgent and hopeful were his supplications—that it was awakening to hear him pray. It was enough to make some Christians feel, 'Hitherto we have asked nothing in Jesus' name.'" Yet this man had no other access to the Father in heaven than is offered to us all.

One more form of worship, as well-nigh universally observed in Christian congregations, must be considered,—the Closing Benediction.

Every deep and earnest Christian wish for the welfare of a friend thrills with a spirit of prayer. A devout "God bless you!" is in it, uttered or unspoken. So the ancient peace-greeting among the Hebrews (Ruth ii. 4), when not observed as a mere polite ceremony, returned to its original significance and became a petition to God.

Was it not a true and beautiful act of the Jewish mothers to bring their little children to Jesus, that He might "put His hands on them and pray"?

Especially at time of parting, in this life of vicissitude and peril, with its always unknown to-morrows, is the last word properly a literal "adieu" or "good-by."

Now the congregation assemble to hear the word of God and to offer themselves to Him in worship. They are led by the minister in their devotions, and receive the Gospel message at his mouth. What shall be his last word as they disperse and depart? What more natural, more inevitable, than that it should be his blessing,—some expression of fervent prayer to God for their highest good? Accordingly we find that in the ancient church, by divine command, Aaron and his successors were to bless the people (Num. vi. 24–26). And in the early Christian churches it needed no command to establish the custom of dismissing the congregation with some form of blessing, such as "The Lord be with you!" or "Depart in peace!" In our day the richer and more significant apostolic benediction (2 Cor. xiii. 14) is used, and the blessing of the triune God invoked upon the people.

What, then, is the nature of this benediction? It is not in the slightest degree sacerdotal. Nor is it the same as the congregational prayer. Suppose you chanced to see a person in secret devotion, and knew he was praying for you; would it not touch your heart with gratitude and with a solemn sense of the nearness of God? "We children got to understand by a sort of spiritual instinct," says John G. Paton, speaking of the "sanctuary closet" into which his godly father would retire every day to hold communion with the heavenly Father, "that prayers were being poured out there for us, as of old by the high priest within the veil of the most holy place. We occasionally heard the pathetic echoes of a trembling voice pleading as if for life, and we learned to slip out and in past that door on tiptoe, not to disturb the holy colloquy." Why did Jesus *tell* Simon Peter, on the eve of the betrayal, that He had prayed for him (Luke xxii. 31, 32)? The benediction is a prayer, and at the same time the assurance, "It is for you—may God bless *you!*"

But perhaps there is no part of congregational worship that is more likely to degenerate into unmeaning form. What an

infinitude of grace and truth in the words! And yet the tone and manner of utterance often show too plainly that we employ them merely as a customary method of closing the exercises.

It is easy to be a priest, easy to perform a rite as if somehow it must have its effect *ex opere operato*, easy to repeat familiar phraseology with a vacant or a wandering mind. But all such dead routine is destructive of the office and influence of the minister of the new covenant. *Mean* your pastoral benediction. Let it be a real intercession in behalf of the people. Then may you trust that it will indeed bring with it the blessing of the Father and turn to their salvation through the supply of the spirit of Jesus Christ.

Read Dr. Samuel Miller's "Thoughts on Public Prayer," Austin Phelps's "The Still Hour."

LECTURE V

THE PRAYER-MEETING

IN many cases the preacher's first public ministration is to lead a prayer-meeting, and on to the close of his ministry this is likely to be one of his stated and constant services. He may be, in the fullest sense in which the word is applicable to any man, the inspiration of the meeting; and, on the other hand, instances might be mentioned in which he seems to be in the way,—not a *minister*, but a burden to be borne. Whether the prayer-meeting shall be a piece of drudgery from which in our secret heart we would gladly be excused, or whether it shall command our observance from week to week as a duty somewhat less than irksome, or whether it shall be a weekly recurring joy and an instrument of ever-increasing power, depends upon ourselves. Let us give to it freely of our thought, love, energy, zeal, prayer, and it will enrich the Christian life of all its participants, most of all our own. Let it be "Oh, nothing but the prayer-meeting," and it will be numbered with the most lifeless of our dead works.

Magnify the prayer-meeting; love it; make it a refreshing and a delight. Personally you are in great need of it; and, as Gladstone said of the orator and his audience, what you get there from your brethren as a mist you may give them back as a shower. The young preacher's adviser who said, "Give one third of your time to the pulpit, one third to your pastoral calls, and one third to the prayer-meeting," would hardly have

been able to justify this threefold division of time; but his hyperbole may serve to emphasize a neglected truth. There is infinite sweetness and worth in the communion of saints.

The closer the prayer-meeting and the pulpit are brought together, the better for both. It is not unusual to contrast the freedom of the one with the fixedness and formality of the other. But if our "public service" be distinguished by these latter qualities, it stands greatly in need of revision and revivification. Doubtless it might be well for some pulpits that the preacher should take more of his *prayer-meeting self* into them, and it might help the prayer-meeting to have somewhat more of his *preaching self* in that. The Sunday services and the mid-week meeting are by no means essentially different. The aim of both is the same, and the same means are employed,—the Word and the worship of God. The difference is a matter of different proportions in the mixture of elements and of modification in their outward forms.

Some of the more distinctive marks of this social Christian ordinance will appear as we look at the subject from our practical point of view,—the ministration of the prayer-meeting.

1. There must be *preparation*, both general and specific. Though the true minister of Christ, living and walking in the Spirit, is never absolutely unprepared to pray with his people or to speak the word of truth, yet it is not given to any human being to be always at his best, and the special service requires the special gathering up of materials and the concentration of energy. It matters not how extraordinary his gifts or how protracted his experience. One of the richest and readiest preachers of our day has said: "Although training for the pulpit is one thing and training for the prayer-meeting is another, I think that the man who is to excel in prayer-meetings must train more for them, though differently, than for the pulpit. I should be very sorry to be forced into the conduct of a prayer-meeting without having anticipated it during the day; not so much that I might think what I was going to say,

but, as it were, to *beat up* my nature, to get into a higher mood, to rise into a thought more of the infinite; to get some such relation to men as I think God has, of sympathy, pity, tenderness, and sweetness; to get my heart all right, so that everything in me should work sympathetically toward devotional ends."

One excellent expedient would be to announce the prayer-meeting topic from the pulpit, and request that the people bear it in mind and make some preparation to hear or speak about it themselves.

Make an experiment—if, indeed, you regard it a matter for experimenting. Spend the day in reading, sermonizing, visiting from house to house, whatever you will, without reference to the circle of prayer in which you are to stand in the evening; think of topics of prayer only while on your knees before the congregation; take a stanza of the hymn that has just been sung, or some familiar verse that seems easy to talk about in the Scripture that has been read, as the starting-point of your remarks. Make this your rule. Occasionally the result may be satisfactory; but for the most part it will be poverty and barrenness, and perhaps a hard, grinding sense of duty in the minds of all. Try another plan. Let your thoughts during the day often find their way to the evening service. Think of the appropriate truth that shall be the topic of the occasion; give whatever time may be necessary to get a clear view of it; think of the people who will be present and pray for them; know what the hymns and Scripture lesson shall be (always reserving the liberty to make desirable changes); let topics of prayer be suggested by cases brought to your attention during the day, e.g. in pastoral visits; be unsatisfied without some measure of eagerness for the hour of meeting; let the sound of the church bell be answered by some such vibration of soul as Dr. Joseph Parker tells of in his Sunday morning experience: "When I awake and find it is Sunday morning, I thank God that the gates of righteousness will be opened presently

and the congregation will assemble to worship God." Let *this* be your rule, and note the result.

If it be asked how to make the prayer-meeting attractive, is there any better way to begin than this? Is not light attractive? and warmth? and power? Will not those who have in them the living germs of the spiritual mind be drawn to hear and to make their own your prayer to God and your words of Christian teaching, even if there should be nothing more to be heard? Though at the beginning no one else should be in the spirit, you may be, and you will not be long alone.

In calling attention to the prayer-meeting in the public congregation, do not let your word be always in the form of an exhortation to attend. This, if too often repeated, will be looked for as a matter of course and will pass unheeded. When an announcement of the meeting is made, use whatever skill you can command to vary its form. It may be your duty to rebuke habitual non-attendance. In such a case imitate the apostle's example (1 Cor. xi.) and that of the supreme Teacher (Rev. ii. 3), and let the reproof be preceded by some word of commendation. Be careful never so to lose your judgment and temper as to reprove in a fretful spirit. To do this is to scold; and while scolding demoralizes, true Christian rebuke is for upbuilding, not for destruction.

In pastoral calls and casual intercourse with church-members, you will probably mention their attendance or failure to attend upon the prayer-meeting. It will thus be seen that you heartily believe in this means of grace, and will not be content so long as those "over whom the Holy Ghost has made you overseers" willingly turn away from it. But this you cannot do in the absence of a true and hearty personal faith in social worship, —a faith that will fan the flame of love in your own heart and purify your own conduct from indifference and neglect.

2. Some *physical conditions* are worthy of consideration. Bodily feeling, whether of enjoyment or of suffering, is unfavorable to devotion. The sensations must be as little obtrusive

as possible. It is not often, indeed, that the prayer-meeting is materialized by physical luxury; though it is possible for the music to be too sensuous and the chair to invite repose. The difficulty is commonly of the opposite character,—the mind diverted by an uncomfortable temperature, or the senses dulled into drowsiness by defective ventilation.

Do not allow the church to economize in gas and oil. By all means let the room be well lighted. And whatever there may be in its appearance of order, cleanliness, brightness, homelikeness, will have not a materializing but a refining and devotional effect. It may devolve upon the pastor—though it should not—to see that such matters receive due attention.

Nor will it take him long also to learn the advantage of having the congregation compact, whether it be large or small, instead of thinly scattered over the room. You may find this matter, like many others, somewhat hard to manage. But all the more does it call for the exercise of patience and skill. Various expedients have been recommended. I will suggest this: If the people are disposed to choose the farthest seats and the obscurest corners, as if merely to look and listen instead of coming near for coöperation, go to them. Put yourself to a little inconvenience if need be. Then, next time, it will be with a better grace that you can ask that they put themselves to the inconvenience of coming closer to you.

3. *Begin promptly*, and close with equal punctuality,—except that the whole time need not invariably be occupied. May we claim the liberty, on the other hand, of transgressing the limit when there is extraordinary interest in the meeting? Better not. Dismiss the meeting at the appointed hour, but give an opportunity for any to remain for another hymn and prayer who may be so inclined. Promptness in opening and closing is especially necessary in the case of this meeting, amid the business and social engagements of the week.

4. Endeavor to make the meeting preëminently one of

Christian communion and service. The motto of the Pleasant Sunday Afternoon Society would not be inapt for the prayer-meeting: "Brief, Bright, and Brotherly." This fraternal relation of redeemed souls—symbolized by the Lord's Supper—found an early and free development in the meeting for common prayer. "These all with one accord continued steadfastly in prayer, with the women, and Mary the mother of Jesus, and with His brethren"; "And they continued steadfastly in the apostles' teaching and fellowship, in the breaking of bread and the prayers"; "And they, when they heard it, lifted up their voice to God with one accord"; "And the multitude of them that believed were of one heart and soul" (Acts of the Apostles). Already had these first Christians become congenial spirits, drawn together about the cross and the throne of their Lord. There had been nothing just like it in the world; no such comradeship, no such society. Early in His ministry Jesus had taught His disciples that prayer must be offered in the spirit of love toward men as well as of faith toward God (Matt. v. 23, 24; Mark xi. 22–26). But that which he gave them later was a "new commandment," characteristic of the completed Christian revelation: "*Even as I have loved you*, that ye also love one another." Praying together and talking one to another about that kingdom of heaven whose true nature they had but just learned, their hearts had been made glad and consciously strong in Christian friendship. It was such fellowship in Christ as Paul would have the Christians in Rome to realize (Rom. xv. 5–7). Paul felt that, as for himself and his fellow-laborers, they must share everything with their brethren, even the comfort that God gave them in trouble and suffering (2 Cor. i. 1–4).

Is there not a familiar illustration of this fellow feeling in our home life? During the day the family is scattered,—the father absent, the mother busy keeping the house, the children at school. But when the darkness falls and the lamps are lighted they all gather about the table in the cheeriest room of

the house for the evening meal, for conversation, for reading, for the sacrifice upon the home altar. Such a scene appears daily in ten thousand Christian homes. The prayer-meeting is the gathering together of a church family in the midst of the week and at the close of the day, a little household of faith in the house of God. It is the church in the fullest realization of its family life.

Therefore is it not a time for warm social greetings, for kindly personal inquiries, for nearness of heart one to another? Be glad to meet every one, whether habitual attendant or stranger, and seek an opportunity, before or after the services, to say so.

But communion will languish unless sustained by mutual service. And here also is an opportunity afforded by the prayer-meeting. It is too generally true that in the public congregation the minister preaches and prays, and the people listen (when they do listen). They quietly allow and expect him to do all. A certain selfish and superstitious element in their nature is not loth to put forward a priest to pray *for* them, instead of a brother and minister to pray *with* them. Or they come to church, if not for this and if not to be entertained, at any rate to "receive" rather than for that which is "more blessed." Is the pastor painfully aware of this enfeebling tendency in his congregation? Let him rejoice to have in the prayer-meeting one efficient means of correcting it. This is the people's meeting; it may be held without a pastor; in some churches the rule is to have it conducted by laymen. Dr. T. L. Cuyler tells us that his prayer-meeting, during nearly the whole of his ministry, was intrusted to the elders of his church. You will not be likely, however, to find willing and efficient substitutes in this ministration, except occasionally. But with the pastor as leader, it is a ministration in which others also must take their part.

There is an opportunity not only for prayer, but also for Christian testimony. The provision for this witness-bearing in

religious meetings, for expressing the consciousness of the life of God in the soul, is no longer a peculiarity of any one religious denomination. Like certain other Christian institutes, such as the revival meeting and the systematic employment of laymen in preaching and exhortation, it has survived the pelting of criticism, both kindly and ill-natured, and is no novelty now in evangelical churches.

To say that such witness-bearing is liable to run into improprieties and extravagance is far from proving it not to be a genuine New Testament practice and an element of power in the church.

Spare no pains to increase the number of those who are willing to pray and to offer testimony. Let it sometimes be a purely voluntary matter with them. It seems to have been so in the New Testament churches. Usually, however, you will call on one and another by name to pray, and sometimes to speak. If in any case this should seem likely to cause painful embarrassment, or even to give offense, gain the person's consent beforehand. The people will probably not complain if you occupy nearly the whole time yourself; but this is not to have a prayer-meeting—it is only to adopt a more or less profitable substitute for one. Do not imagine there are no others besides yourself who can speak to comfort and edification. There are those whose unstudied utterances will do more good on this or that subject than the very best that you could say. Make it plain to them that a few words from a non-official source, though brokenly uttered, may be a more real contribution to the purpose of the meeting than many a smoother and fuller flow of speech. "To the majority of mankind," says "The Tongue of Fire," "the great problems, 'What must I do to be saved? What is believing? Whereby shall I know that I shall inherit glory? Am I, or am I not, deceiving myself? How can I overcome this temptation, the sorest that ever beset me? How can I grow in grace?' and such like, have often more light shed upon them by the plain statement of an

individual as to how divine mercy solved them in his own case than by any general explanation."

Say a word of encouragement after meeting to the more timid and inexperienced speakers. On the other hand, you may sometimes be called upon to control the indiscreet and garrulous talker, and especially the brother whose life does not commend him to the confidence of the community. This will require both tact and appreciation, both mother-wit and Christian love; but it can be done. It may also be incumbent upon you at times to explain what a Christian's word of testimony is: not a profession of personal goodness, the self-complacent boast of the Pharisee, not an exhortation, not the application to one's self of ill-considered Scripture passages, not the expression of what one feels ought to be said for the encouragement of others; but the simple word of personal faith and hope in Christ, of the consciousness of the divine presence, of determination in the power of God for the future, of confession of faults one to another, to be followed by prayer one for another that we may be healed.

Nor does the obligation of Christian testimony require that one should attempt to tell everything. Even we may hear words in the interior life not lawful to utter. There is something in human affection too sacredly personal to admit of publication. Similarly the soul alone with the Father may have spiritual experiences—sorrows, doubts, crosses, struggles, consolations, perplexities, hopes, communings—which it would not know how, and need not desire, to tell. "And I will give him a white stone, and upon the stone a new name written, which no one knoweth but he that receiveth it" (Rev. ii. 17). Christian testimony is not garrulity, nor is it indelicacy of soul.

And what if the tongue should trip and stammer, or even sometimes misrepresent the mind and feeling within? It is no other infirmity, though greater perhaps, than that of the most mature and experienced preacher in prayer and preaching.

What is a church? Let the answer be given again and

again, till it becomes even more familiar and unquestionable in practice than in definition: "Not a social club, nor an æsthetic confectioner's, nor an intellectual prize-ring, nor a mutual admiration society, nor a spiritual hammock; but a workshop in which you are a worker; an army in which you are a soldier; a body of which you are a member; a family in which the old are not to be arrogant, nor the young presumptuous, but each serving the other."

Remember what a mighty instrument the prayer-meeting is in a revival, before and after and during the special services. It is for *service*, and not simply toward fellow-believers, but also toward "them that are without," to bring them to Christ. "Now Peter and John were going up into the temple at the hour of prayer, being the ninth hour" (Acts iii. 1); and that hour of prayer proved to be also a time of beneficent work, for at the Gate Beautiful a lame man was lying whom they healed of his infirmity. Many a soul has found healing, in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, through the ministration of those, both ministers and laymen, who went "up into the temple at the hour of prayer."

5. Need I say that this intercommunion of Christian souls must not degenerate into mere social chit-chat, nor the services become so businesslike as to lose the spirit of devotion? The prayer-meeting is utterly unworthy of its name, a travesty of divine worship, unless it be *devotional.*

The complaint is sometimes made, "That brother, with his wearisome talk, his slow singing, his long, stereotyped prayer, will kill the meeting." It may be; but it may also be that that other brother, the leader, with his mechanical chopping up of the exercises into little bits, his obtrusion of himself with directions and ejaculations into even the most sacred moments of prayer, his continual expression of shallow emotion, his pragmatic push and stir and management, as if here were something that could be done by might and by power,—it may be that this too is to "despise prophesyings" and to "quench the

Spirit." It is well that there should be a lively meeting, but with what kind of life? Let the stream run bright and musical, but not recklessly at the expense of depth. Is your prayer-meeting such as may be expected to result in deep convictions of sin, deep searchings of heart, deep inspiration and joy in the Christain life? It is well that we should be companionable toward the human presence, but not so as to become forgetful or irreverent toward the divine. It is well to show common sense and good management everywhere, but the spirit of devotion cannot be forced or mechanically directed and controlled.

6. One more suggestion. Observe the principle of *unity in variety*. All churches have prescribed with more or less precision the order and character of public worship. Has it not been a true Christian instinct that has prevented such regulation of the prayer-meeting? Here the customary mode of procedure is supposed to be quite flexible; the largest liberty is allowed, because demanded by the prayer-meeting idea. Not that there should be eccentricity or disorder; not that change and diversity should be regarded as in themselves enrichment. Diversity is preferable to monotony only as a sign and an excitant of life. But a meeting for common prayer and thanksgiving, the family gathering of the church, which arose at the beginning among the disciples and inspired apostles of Christ somewhat as the celebration of the day of the resurrection arose,—because it *had to be*,—can easily make good its plea for the minimum amount of restraint upon its spirit of freedom, originality, and varied movement.

There is one respect, indeed, in which a greater degree of regularity than seems to be commonly observed would be an improvement, and that is in the selection of topics from week to week. For this concerns the teaching element, and instruction is better given systematically. Why not select a suitable series of topics,—say for the next two or three months? Consider what the needs of this and that class of your church-

members, in the development of their religious life, seem to require. Or what do the changing outward circumstances of the church make appropriate,—the beginning and the close of the natural or the ecclesiastical year, the commonly observed Christian festivals, the presentation of benevolent causes, the various undertakings of the church, any religiously instructive current events in the community?

Or you may find it beneficial to keep some one general subject before the congregation for several successive occasions. Suppose, for illustration, it should be the subject of "Christian Earnestness." Take as your Scripture lesson 1 Corinthians ix. 19–27. Each week, for a month, present some one aspect of the general theme. Would not this in many instances make a deeper and more permanent impression than four distinct weekly topics?

Or it might serve a good purpose to go through some whole book of the Bible, selecting here and there the most suitable passages,—taking care also not to become too expository, but to give the prominent place always to experiential and practical topics. Note the method pursued in the selection of the yearly series of Sunday-school lessons by the International Committee; it may prove suggestive.

Look ahead; have a plan; remember one of your titles as a minister of Christ is *builder* (1 Cor. iii. 9–15). But always hold even your most carefully prepared plan subject to alteration or reversal. Be glad to have it rendered useless at any time by the occurrence of new and unexpected opportunities. Is there some truth not in your "scheme" that has got possession of people's minds, or is there some manifest token of divine power among them? Let that give direction to the services.

I will make a few suggestions more specifically upon the *sources* of variety.

(1) Emphasize the *reading of the Scriptures*. Give a number of passages on some one subject, so arranged as to develop it

in an orderly and progressive manner, with pertinent comments. Other persons may take part in the reading, and, if desirable, in the commenting also. Distribute Bibles and slips of paper with the selected passages written on them. When you call for the reading, encourage questions and remarks.

(2) Emphasize the *hymns*. Call attention now and then to the sentiment, or to interesting circumstances connected with their authorship. Combine with the singing the reading of psalms and of devotional passages from the New Testament.

(3) Emphasize *meditation*. Take a hint from the Society of Friends, who wait in prayerful silence of heart and lips for the Spirit's voice. "With absolutely nothing to draw our minds from worship," says one of them, "we wait reverently upon God, each one for himself, the hungry seeking bread and the thirsty the water of life, and each receives the refreshment his soul needs." Have moments of silent prayer. Let hymns, Scripture passages, remarks, all be in the direction of heart-searching (not of emotions but of motives), retrospect, resolves for the future, patient waiting for God.

(4) Emphasize the *spoken word*. Martin Luther declared that "the Christian congregation should never assemble, except the Word of God be preached." It was an extreme statement, to which he was driven by the corruption and dearth of preaching in the Roman Church. Let us sometimes assemble and agree together touching one thing to ask it of our Father in heaven, though not a word of teaching or exhortation be delivered. Nevertheless, we need hardly be reminded that usually such a word has a place in the prayer-meeting. Sometimes let it be made very prominent. Even if it should occupy nearly as much time as in the regular preaching service, no matter.

Your talk may be given at the beginning; or at the close,—a summing up of the significance of hymns, prayers, and testimony; or now and then throughout the exercises.

(5) Emphasize the *prayers*. Notify the congregation, and ask any who will to hand in requests for prayer; or call for them on the occasion.

Such suggestions might easily be multiplied. Let these suffice to show that, while some congregations doubtless are capable of greater variation in their prayer services than are others, in none is there any good reason for sameness or formality. Instead of being at a loss for variety, the interested and earnest minister will feel the lack of opportunity.

It is evident also that here is no labor-saving expedient, but rather a labor-demanding ideal; and yet an ideal whose pursuit will become natural and inspiring in proportion to the amount of energy, intellectual, social, and spiritual, that we are expending upon it. Whereas indolence, here as elsewhere, will keep its congenial rut.

But in this variety there will be the unity of a single pervading aim; many incidents and forms, but one ground-thought, one spirit, one law. Not merely that there should be some specific truth or purpose to strike the key-note of hymn and prayer and spoken word in each meeting, but always the ultimate purpose is communion with the living God. To draw near to God,—that is our object. To be in the light and glory of our Lord; to have the baptism of the Spirit on our hearts; to have the intruding annoyances and cares of life swept away, and its great sorrows that must abide illumined with light from heaven; to have the heart made strong and triumphant in the sense of forgiveness and the knowledge of its Redeemer; the tranquil mind, "the silent heaven of love," —it is for no lower good than this, and it can be for no higher, that we wait upon the Lord in His house together. And this only can supremely qualify us for service. "When they had prayed, the place was shaken wherein they were gathered together; and they were all filled with the Holy Ghost, and they *spake the word of God with boldness*. . . . And *with great power gave the apostles their witness* of the

resurrection of the Lord Jesus: and great grace was upon them all" (Acts iv. 31, 33).

Let us not go off and seek in many places for that secret of power that can be found only in our own hearts before God. "The word is nigh thee, in thy mouth and in thy heart." In all consultations and inquiries in quest of better plans and more successful methods, let us not miss the word of heavenly wisdom that is spoken, if we will but listen, to us all. How may we make the prayer-meeting attractive and profitable? Let it become more and more a *Christian* prayer-meeting, in the fellowship of the Spirit, a real and united seeking after God, a grateful and united rejoicing in His presence.

Read "The Prayer-Meeting and its Improvement," by L. O. Thompson.

PART SECOND

THE MINISTRY OF PREACHING

SCHEME

I. THE SCRIPTURE GERM.

II. THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE GERM.

1. PROCESSES OF DEVELOPMENT.
   - (1) Exposition.
   - (2) Argument.
   - (3) Description.
   - (4) Illustration.
   - (5) Persuasion.
2. FORMS OF DEVELOPMENT.
   - (1) The Plan.
     - (*a*) The Proposition.
     - (*b*) The Divisions.
   - (2) The Fulfilment of the Plan.
     - (*a*) The Amplification.
     - (*b*) The Introduction.
     - (*c*) The Conclusion.
     - (*d*) Literary Form.

III. THE SPIRIT OF THE SERMON.

IV. THEMES AND OCCASIONS OF PREACHING.

1. ORDER—REPETITION—SOME SPECIAL OCCASIONS.
2. SOCIAL THEMES.
3. THE PREACHER BEFORE THE CHILDREN.
4. THE PREACHER AS AN EVANGELIST.

V. THE PREACHING ITSELF.

1. THE PREPARATION OF THE SERMON WITH REFERENCE TO ITS DELIVERY.
2. PERSONAL PREPARATION.
3. THE TWOFOLD ACTION IN SPEECH.
4. THE ACTION OF THE SOUL—ON SUBJECT, AUDIENCE, OBJECT.
5. EXTEMPORANEOUS PREACHING—IN THE ACT.

Then said I, Woe is me! for I am undone; because I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips: for mine eyes have seen the King, the Lord of hosts. Then flew one of the seraphim unto me, having a live coal in his hand, which he had taken with the tongs from off the altar: and he touched my mouth with it, and said, Lo, this hath touched thy lips; and thine iniquity is taken away, and thy sin purged. And I heard the voice of the Lord saying, Whom shall I send, and who will go for us? Then I said, Here am I; send me.—Isa. vi. 5–8.

And he said, The God of our fathers hath appointed thee to know His will, and to see the Righteous One, and to hear a voice from His mouth. For thou shalt be a witness for Him unto all men of what thou hast seen and heard.—Acts xxii. 14, 15.

And the life was manifested, and we have seen, and bear witness, and declare unto you the life, the eternal life, which was with the Father, and was manifested unto us.—1 John i. 2.

LECTURE I

THE SCRIPTURE GERM—USE, CHOICE

IN the preparation of a sermon we have somewhat to begin with,—a passage of Scripture. A most significant peculiarity of the text, as compared with the other parts of the sermon, is that it is not of our own making. So the initial life and substance of the whole discourse is provided for us. No man has ever numbered the passages in the Bible appropriate to Christian preaching. Which shall we choose for any particular occasion? To make such a choice, and this only, is our province; selection, not creation.

In fact, even this may be done for us, and with a distinct advantage. To preach from a text by request, or from a prescribed text,—during a Week of Prayer, for example,—may lead us into some neglected field that will prove unexpectedly fresh and fruitful. Ordinarily, however, the responsibility of selection is our own.

Sometimes, indeed, the preacher begins with a theme and then looks for a text that contains it; oftener, perhaps, he begins with a text and looks for the theme that it contains. But whichever may be first in the order of time, the text evidently has precedence in the order of thought. It is the Scripture germ out of which the organism of discourse arises. It must be in it all, interpenetrative, as the tea-leaves are in the cup of tea, as the letters of the alphabet are in the book, as the seed is in the full-grown plant.

Now is this an artificial or a natural requirement? Is the custom of taking texts to be regarded as in any sense a puerility of the pulpit? Some persons seem to think so. I have heard an intelligent layman remark: "The text is a mere formality; what you want is a theme." This opinion, like many others that display the badge of novelty, is very old—common enough, we are told, among the preachers of Alexandria and Antioch centuries ago. If it be true as well as old, let this formality of texts, however prevalent, be thrown aside. The last place in the world for the unthinking and the unreal is the Christian pulpit.

To the congregation in general the custom is by no means objectionable. On the contrary, it interests them. The first question likely to be asked about a sermon is "What was the text?" And often the part of the sermon longest and best remembered is the one great word of Scripture with which it began. If, then, the votes of the people should be taken as decisive of the matter, there can be little doubt of the result. But we must see further.

Let us consider:

I. The Use of Texts. And this as to its *principle* and its *advantages*.

1. The *principle* of this time-honored custom is a sufficient reason for its perpetuation, for it is no other than that *the text is the subject itself*. The theme of every sermon is Christian truth as revealed in the Scriptures. There is no exception in an evangelical pulpit. What we are sent to preach is not simply truth upon this or that topic,—the righteousness and the mercy of God, repentance, faith, forgiveness, holiness, judgment,—but the truth upon these topics "as truth is in Jesus," and as it was taught by Him and by His chosen witnesses. Why, then, should we not take a text? How naturally and inevitably did the custom originate! There is such a superstition as bibliolatry, but it is a mistake to suppose that we have found it here.

The college professor will frequently announce a chapter or a section of his text-book as the basis of his lecture. Suppose there were one text-book of unimpeachable authority and comprehensive of all the known principles of the subject; would not his themes uniformly be some portion of that book? Or, to take a case more similar to that of the preacher, no one asks why the Sunday-school teacher always chooses his lesson from the Bible. It is his very office to teach those Bible lessons. And what is the preacher but a Sunday-school teacher, with a larger and more mixed class of scholars?

Quite in accordance with this idea of the sermon as an exposition of some truth of revelation, we find that the preaching of the first Christian centuries, though marred by many digressions, was predominantly exegetical. The sermons of the church fathers were for the most part "homilies," not unlike the ordinary prayer-meeting talk in our churches. Whole books were expounded in order by these primitive preachers to their congregations. Chrysostom, the noblest figure of them all, is said to have gone through the entire Bible in this way. A similar record has come down to us of Origen, who has received the somewhat doubtful title of "the father of Christian preaching." Not without many errors and weaknesses were these fathers of the church; but it was by no means an error or a weakness that would have caused them surprise, as at an unmeaning question, if it had been asked them, "Why do you take a text?"

In the pulpit of to-day short texts—a verse, a clause—have to a large extent superseded the longer ones of the early Christain centuries; but the principle is the same. And concerning this prevalence of short texts in the modern pulpit two things may be said: (1) there is deeper insight into the meaning of Scripture and greater elaborateness in treating it than in those earlier times, and hence not so large a portion can be expounded within a given time limit; and (2) there is still a great deal of what may be called by way of distinction expository

preaching,—"the ennobled continuation of the homily of the ancient church."

The prophets and apostles—though not simply the great preachers of their times, but themselves authors of sacred Scripture and witnesses of the kingdom of truth for all times—put their preaching into closest relations with preceding revelations of God's will. The prophet did not ignore the Law; he preached it. The heart of the psalmist, in like manner, thrilled with enthusiastic love for the Law as the expression of the righteous will of God. And how constantly are the Old Testament words on the lips of the apostles of our Lord! They use these Scriptures to make men wise unto salvation through faith in our Lord Jesus Christ. The scores of quotations, direct and indirect, from the Old Testament in the apostolic epistles furnish a suggestive chapter in the history of "the continuity of Christian thought."

Above all, we see Him who was the incarnate Word not only giving His new and perfect revelation of the Father, but honoring and interpreting the Scriptures. Indeed, Himself and His whole life, inasmuch as they perfectly fulfilled the law and the prophets, were likewise the final and full interpretation thereof; for the only complete interpretation is fulfilment. But in His preaching specifically Jesus explained and applied the Scriptures. Speaking always with authority, Himself the Wisdom of God, calmly declaring at the beginning of His ministry, "Ye have heard that it was said to those of old time . . . but I say unto you,"—Jesus was nevertheless an expounder of the Old Testament: "*This* is the law and the prophets"; "And beginning from Moses and from all the prophets, He interpreted to them in *all the Scriptures* the things concerning Himself"; "To-day hath *this Scripture* been fulfilled in your ears." Jesus must preach Himself, and one way of doing so was to show, from the words of prophets in whom the Spirit spoke beforehand of His sufferings and of the glory that should follow, how the Scriptures bore witness of Him.

In the last of the quotations just made we have gone back from the Church to the Synagogue. When Jesus of Nazareth spoke upon the Scripture lesson in the synagogue of his town, it was nothing unusual that He did. An expository address after the reading was the custom of the time. It was not the fact but the character of our Lord's exposition that caused astonishment.

Taking texts, then, is confessedly an old custom; the principle of it has been illustrated from the beginning of the Gospel until now. But to be old may mean to be indispensable. Certainly it does not always mean to be antiquated, else the sun in the heavens, and the morning's dawn, which always "comes up the old bright way," with the fruitful earth beneath, and the beating heart of man, would all be out of date.

The ancient offices of the scribe in the synagogue (Acts xv. 21), and the prophet coming before the people wherever he can find them with a message from God, are combined and perpetuated in the Christian ministry. The one Priest of the new covenant has passed into the heavens, but men may still be prophets and scribes of the church of God. Between the word of exposition and the prophetic word in the Christian pulpit there is no conflict. On the contrary, each confirms the other. But it is with the former only that we are now concerned. We are scribes; it is our business to know and to teach the Scriptures. Not, indeed, as the scribes were prone to do in the time of Christ, abusing their office; not sticking in the letter and losing religion in a fanciful and false exegesis; but as scribes instructed unto the kingdom of heaven. There has been committed unto us the key of knowledge, that we may both go in ourselves and open the door to all who are willing to enter.

2. The *advantages* in the use of texts are such as the following:

(1) It furnishes an *intellectual stimulus.* The reading of suggestive passages in some suitable book has been recom-

mended as an expedient for wakening a dull mind to its work in original composition. A literary friend once asked Washington Irving if he ever found relief from mental depression and a stimulus to work in this way. "Often," he answered; "and none are more effective with me for this service than the sacred writers. I think I have waked a good many sleeping fancies by the reading of a chapter in Isaiah." For the preacher the reading and study of the text is often enough. Sluggish indeed must that mind be that is not stirred by the great truths that strive for expression in the numberless forms and associations of Bible language,—in history, poetry, precept, argument, promise, threatening, parable, prophecy. For these men of inspiration put both intellect and heart, their whole selves, into what they have to say. Not only do they hold possession of the most momentous and precious truth, but they are constrained to deliver it; it is "the burden of the Lord." Hence in an intellectual as well as in a far deeper sense their words are words of life, communicative, contagious, inspiring.

Take even the very familiar passages. Let any preacher say whether his mind is not quickened and interested on the subject of God's care of His children by reading the words, "It is vain for you that ye rise up early, and so late take rest, and eat the bread of toil: for so He giveth unto His beloved sleep [margin, *in sleep*]" (Ps. cxxvii. 2); on the nature of true religion by 1 Corinthians iv. 20: "For the kingdom of God is not in word, but in power"; on love to our neighbor by the parable of the good Samaritan; on life and immortality by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead.

(2) *It is spiritually helpful.* That is but feeble preaching which is not expressive of a present spiritual life and experience in the preacher himself. Though he should be at his best intellectually and emotionally, this is not sufficient. He must communicate in the sermon a life which is being communicated to him. And how often is this life of God felt in all its

power during prayerful meditation on some word of Holy Writ! The heart is thereby drawn to God in reverence, faith, and love; it is led into the holy of holies where His glory appears. So the minister is himself sanctified by the word which he is preparing to minister for the sanctification of others.

I would fain hope that the experience which Dr. Stalker has so fitly expressed may often be your own:

"When we are shut in alone, and, the spirit having been silenced and collected by prayer, the mind gets slowly down into the heart of a text like a bee in a flower, it is like heaven upon earth; it is as if the soul were bathing itself in morning dews; the dust and fret are washed off, and the noises recede into the distance; peace comes; we move aloft in another world,—the world of ideas and realities; the mind mounts joyfully from one height to another; it sees the common world far beneath, yet clearly, in its true meaning and size and relations to other worlds. And then one comes down on Sabbath to speak to the people, calm, strong, and clear, like Moses from the mount, and with a true divine message."

(3) It is to both preacher and congregation a *perpetual reminder of the commission of a Christian minister.* As Christ, in serving the hungry people in the wilderness, "gave the loaves to the disciples, and the disciples to the multitude," so it is from Him that His apostles now receive the bread of truth which, through their ministration, is given to the people. To lose the consciousness of these relations in which they stand as ministers of Christ is to be untrue, to incur the risk of becoming mere essayists or lecturers instead of preachers of the Word. To be distinctly conscious of these relations is to have one's speech clothed with a power that nothing else can give. It will loose the tongue of the dumb. It will make the humblest preacher even like his Master, "a prophet mighty in deed and word before God and all the people." "To be full of one's subject and to speak without fear" has been given as a description of eloquence. To feel oneself to be speaking

for God, standing before the people as His representative, with no selfish end to accomplish, possessed of His Word, tremulous with awe in His presence, fearing nothing but to displease Him, burdened only with an infinite debt of love,—this will give to men who on any other subject would be diffident and slow of speech the tender touches and the inimitable boldness of something more than eloquence. And the people will listen to such a speaker as to a man sent forth from God to declare His will. The spirit of confidence and of command, the tone of authority in which he speaks, will not be offensive to them, but welcome and impressive. "Ye received me," says Paul to the Galatians, "as an angel of God, even as Jesus Christ."

Manifestly the custom of preaching directly from words of Scripture will tend to inspire and maintain this consciousness. In the early days of Methodism the people stood to hear the text announced. It was a reverent and beautiful observance whose meaning cannot be mistaken. They felt, preacher and congregation, "Here is a message from God, about to be read and expounded by His servant."

(4) It is promotive of *variety in preaching*. Is there any other public speaker that addresses the same audience as frequently as does the preacher? Compare him in this respect with the political orator, the popular lecturer, the college professor. The difference is manifest. Nor is it owing simply to the frequency of his addresses that he must have new themes continually, but also because of the vast number and variety of needs in his congregation. The heart of man,—its hopes, fears, joys, possibilities, sorrows, sins,—who can know it? who can minister to it as he would? Surely here is an incessant demand on the inventive faculties. But there is also a divine provision for this necessity. See our themes provided for us in the Book which represents the ages of revelation, and, growing richer and more perfect, culminates in the Cross of Christ, adapted to all the wants and aspirations of the human soul,

tens of thousands of passages heralding the common salvation in forms and aspects innumerable. The last evil which a biblical pulpit need apprehend is a dearth of apposite and fruitful subjects of discourse.

The beginner in the ministry sometimes fears that after a few months he will have nothing to preach; but at the end of four or of forty years he may leave his charge with more "texts for preaching" in his note-book than on the first day of his pastoral term.

II. **The Choice of Texts.**

Many stumble at this point—stumble on the threshold of the sermon. Not that the art of choosing texts is difficult, for no extraordinary talents are required; but here, as in many employments, we may blunder for years from not having the right standard set before us at the beginning; or, it may be, for lack of a few directions which when plainly stated seem self-evident.

The importance of a thoroughly good choice is obvious. I cannot, indeed, encourage the idea that this involves almost everything. Dr. Shedd, in "Homiletics and Pastoral Theology" (p. 175), says: "As in secular oratory the selection of a subject is either vital or fatal to the whole performance, so in sacred oratory the success of the preacher depends entirely upon the fitness of his choice of a text. The text is his subject; it is the germ of the whole discourse. Provided, therefore, he has found an apt and excellent one, he has found his sermon substantially." The first and the last sentence of this passage seem to me a strange exaggeration. There is a sense in which the whole plant is in the germ, but the farmer has much more to do and much more risk to run after getting possession of his seed-wheat than before.

Appropriateness in a text is the adaptation of a perfect instrument to its end; it is good seed-wheat with reference to a wheat harvest; while the lack of appropriateness may be a source of weakness and failure.

What, then, are some of the suggestions to be offered on

this subject? I will number them in a single series, and indicate at the same time certain principles of division.

1. As to its Source, the text should be

(1) *A genuine passage of Scripture.* An interpolation is no more a part of the Bible than if the words occurred in any other writing. You would not for any consideration add a statement of your own to a book of the Bible and have it published as part of the original; and if this should occur accidentally you would deplore the accident and would be very careful to avoid it thereafter. But to preach from any other than a genuine passage is not only preaching from substituted or inserted words, but in a measure giving sanction to the interpolation.

If Wesley were now in the flesh he would doubtless preach Trinitarian doctrine; but he would not take as the text of a sermon on the Trinity 1 John v. 7 (A. V.), as he did a hundred years ago. Nor would Bishop Simpson probably now include the telling exposition of the little phrase "with joy" in his famous sermon on the "Christian Ministry." (from Acts xx. 24).

(2) It should be *a correctly translated passage.* No translation is perfect. The transference of thought and emotion from any language to any other is necessarily attended with certain losses, just as is the substitution of written for spoken language. But a mistranslation conveys a positively untrue meaning to the reader's mind. Hence, like an interpolation, it is no part of the real book. Before it can be employed as a text the correct translation must be given. A scholarly preacher would not now be likely to preach a sermon, as Dr. Chalmers did, on the "Universality of the Gospel Offer," from the words "Good will toward men" (Luke ii. 14).

In regard to both the genuineness and the correct translation of passages, happily we have an authority that is both accessible and trustworthy in the Revised Version.

(3) Note the obvious *distinction between the words of the Bible itself and the sentiments of its historical characters.* Is it

the Book of God? For this very reason in no other book are the moral depths of the soul so opened up in human speech. For God would make us acquainted with one another and thus also reveal us to ourselves. So the word we read may be a word of unspeakable wickedness ("What are ye willing to give me, and I will deliver Him unto you?"—Matt. xxvi. 15); or of wonder ("What then shall this child be?"—Luke i. 66); or of keenest sorrow ("Would God I had died for thee, O Absalom, my son, my son!"—2 Sam. xviii. 33); or of Christian confession ("Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God"—Matt. xvi. 16); of anger, fear, religious inquiry, prayer, praise, hope, faith, resignation. All these are recorded for our instruction; they represent the truth in many interesting and thrilling aspects; out of them all, as Scripture texts, we may preach to the people. But let us not carelessly ascribe the language of any speaker in the Bible to the sacred historian who records it.

Moreover, we are not to assume that the words of even the most upright or gifted or saintly men of the Bible were always perfectly wise and good. These men had like infirmities with ourselves; they were not the first-born sons of light. I once heard a sermon on the death of King David (1 Kings ii. 1–10), in which the preacher was evidently embarrassed by the dying charge of the great king, which he laid upon Solomon, his successor, that he should not let the head of the aged Joab "go down to the grave in peace." Such a man as David,—so the preacher assumed,—occupying the position which he occupied in the church of God, could hardly make a mistake or indulge a wrong feeling at the close of his life. Somehow it must have been right for him to deliver this cruel and bloody charge. Was David, then, infallible in judgment and perfect in righteousness and love? Does the Bible say that his dying utterances were inspired of God? Or shall it be regarded as altogether reasonable that in the Bible we should meet again and again with the miracle of a perfect life?

One Life has been lived on earth whose every word and deed was an unadulterated word of God; but of no other can this be said. Let the words and deeds of all others be judged by the light of Christ. Use them in the pulpit, not for what you would fain have them to be, but for what they are.

(4) Texts should be chosen with a certain *proportionateness* from the various books of the Bible. For "every Scripture inspired of God is also profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for instruction which is in righteousness: that the man of God may be complete, furnished completely unto every good work." Therefore every Scripture should be preached; and to find our subjects in the New Testament to the neglect of the Old, or in the historical, the doctrinal, the devotional, the prophetic parts of the Bible to the neglect of others, is almost certainly to give a partial, one-sided course of teaching. Nevertheless, all portions are not equally profitable; and hence some are to be preached in larger measure than others. Each had its primary and special significance to the people to whom it was originally given, and has its ultimate significance for us; and all are combined in a wonderful unity. But just as in the unity of the body some organs are more serviceable than others, so in the Scriptures. No one would wish to lose the little finger of his left hand, but all would prefer this to the loss of an eye. Why should you not preach from Leviticus? But why should you not also preach much oftener from the Psalms and the Gospel According to John?

As to the relative prominence of the two Testaments in the pulpit I can hardly imagine a Christian preacher hesitating. Indeed, we dare not preach the truth merely as it appears in the Old Testament; for have we not known that same truth in the light of a fuller revelation? A traveler will not describe a country merely as it appears under the stars when he has also seen it in the sunlight. The Gospels and the Epistles complete and fulfil the Law and the Prophets.

Nevertheless completion is not substitution. We shall

never outlive our need of the Old Testament, in the pulpit or elsewhere. Let us teach its facts and truths under the light of the Gospel. And be it also remembered that this is not to read the New Testament into the Old,—not to import a meaning from our familiar knowledge of the evangel of Jesus into the words of psalmist and prophet and into the institutions and events of an earlier dispensation. For example, there are many types in the Old Testament, and the whole ministration of truth to Israel had its preliminary, anticipative, prophetic aspect; but in our typology we must not allegorize above what is written. Isaiah had his glorious visions of God and Christ; but John the Baptist was greater than Isaiah; and he that is least in the kingdom of heaven is greater than John. Some one has said of a so-called exposition by Guthrie, "The Gospel in Ezekiel," that Dr. Guthrie seemed to think that Ezekiel "had signed the confession of faith." Of topsy-turvy exegesis there has been quite enough. It is a poor way of understanding the roots of a tree, to fancy them the same as the trunk and the branches.

2. As to Number and Length.

(5) There are sometimes good reasons for taking *more than one text* for the same sermon. It may be your purpose to show two important and striking aspects of a subject that are not given in any single passage. You propose, e.g., to preach on "The Doing of Good Works before our Fellow-men"; and choosing as your two texts Matthew v. 16 and Matthew vi. 3, you go on to show the right and the wrong spirit in relation to such deeds,—the two texts being complementary to each other and together presenting the complete truth. Or you take the apostle's paradox in Galatians vi. 2, 5, and show the sense in which we may, and that in which we may not, bear the burdens of others. Dr. T. L. Cuyler adds another passage, "Cast thy burden upon the Lord" (Ps. lv. 22), and preaches from this triplet of texts. One of Spurgeon's sermons, entitled "A Serious Contrast," is from the two passages,

"He that covereth his sins shall not prosper" and "Thou hast covered all their sins." The opening sentence shows the drift of the discourse: "In these two texts we have *man's covering*, which is worthless and culpable, and *God's covering*, which is profitable and worthy of all acceptation."

Or the two aspects of the subject may be one general and the other specific; e.g., "Honor all men. . . . Honor the king" (1 Pet. ii. 17).

Again, it may be your purpose to set forth some experience or some truth in the successive stages of its development. The two passages, Matthew xix. 27 and Acts v. 41, are an appropriate pair of texts for a discourse on "Christian Progress from Self-seeking to Self-devotion." The Rev. John Ker has a sermon entitled "Moses and Stephen, the Old Testament and the New," from Exodus xxxiv. 30 and Acts vi. 15. His object is, by means of two incidents which he regards as typical, to point out the progress in the unfolding of spiritual truth, from the giving of the Law to the preaching of the Gospel.

The fact that we regularly read two lessons in our Sunday morning services, one from the Old Testament and the other from the New, is not without suggestiveness in this connection.

Sometimes several texts are employed. Dr. Joseph Parker, in his sermon on "Judas Iscariot," announces, one after another, the various passages relating to the subject, and by a skilful exposition of each presents his completed picture of the betrayer of Jesus. Not long since I heard what the preacher modestly called "a Bible reading" on the Lord's Supper, in which a similar method was followed.

Is it necessary to add that the occasions for the use of more than one text are not likely to be frequent; or that to combine two or more texts in the hope of giving weight to the sermon, somewhat as a writer may quote numerous mottoes for each chapter of his book, is a vain and fruitless fancy?

The unwisdom of choosing two texts under the appearance of one, is still more evident. In other words, the text must

have unity. E.g., to preach from Romans xii. 12 would be to take three texts and to preach three sermons under the guise of one, unless we should be able to make such a generalization as would unitize these separate passages under a higher truth.

(6) The *length of texts* will vary with their character and their mode of treatment. The ninth chapter of the Gospel of John is a perfect unity and is not too long for a text, while there are single verses in it from which whole series of sermons might be preached.

There is a peculiar force, the power of truth concentrated and compacted, in short, intense texts. They can also be easily repeated by the preacher and easily remembered by the hearer. But the longer text will probably embrace a still greater amount of the substance of holy Scripture. It will require more exposition; and the more of "God's Word written" we can bring into immediate contact with souls, the better. The tendency of young preachers is, I think, to announce for texts as few words as possible; with increasing age and experience they rather desire as many as possible. They come to see that to develop only the salient points of comparatively long passages—narratives, arguments, prayers, parables—is a difficult, an interesting, and a profitable kind of preaching.

Note also the familiar short texts that would be revivified for pulpit use by simply including a few preceding or following words that somehow are habitually overlooked. Who preaches, e.g., from the whole of Galatians vi. 14? There is no lack of sermons on 1 Corinthians xvi. 22, but I know of only one (by Dr. Maclaren) entitled "Anathema and Grace," and including in its text verses 21–24. Many preachers choose the text "God is love;" but very few take the whole verse in which these glorious words are given as the reason for a most significant fact of human experience,—"He that loveth not knoweth not God; for God is love" (1 John iv. 8). (Note also verse

16.) Another example: "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved, *and thy house*" (Acts xvi. 31).

It is a custom with some ministers, in preaching from a narrative, to announce the last verse only. Such a text is allowable only in case of its being what has been called an "epitome text,"—that is to say, a passage containing the gist and substance of the whole general subject. E.g., in preaching on "The Healing of the Leper" (Matt. viii. 2–4) why should we read as the text simply verse 4? Not that, but the whole story, is our theme. On the other hand, in preaching on "The Healing of the Syrophenician Woman's Daughter" (Matt. xv. 21–28) we might announce the twenty-eighth verse as the text, because these words may be regarded as epitomizing the facts and teachings of the miracle. Even in this instance, however, it would probably be better to read all the verses to the congregation. In like manner one might announce as a text Matthew xviii. 35: "So shall also My heavenly Father do unto you, if ye forgive not every one his brother from your hearts"; but why not announce your entire text, the parable itself of the unmerciful servant, together with our Lord's application of it in this thirty-fifth verse?

In some cases, however, no other than an epitome text is available, because the whole textual basis of the sermon may include various long and widely separated passages. Dr. William M. Taylor, for example, has a sermon on the providence of God in Paul's visit to Rome, in which he undertakes to show (1) that it was a long-cherished purpose of the apostle to visit Rome; (2) that this purpose was not attained in the way that he had expected; (3) that nevertheless his visit accomplished the desired object. The text is a very brief sentence, "And so we went toward Rome" (Acts xxviii. 14), but felicitously chosen to *represent* the whole history.

A fine example of an epitome text is the passage selected by Monod for his sermon on "Mary Magdalene": "Now when He was risen on the first day of the week, He appeared first

to Mary Magdalene, from whom He had cast out seven devils" (Mark xvi. 9). Here the two greatest facts in the life of the subject of the discourse—the one representing her earlier and the other her later life—are significantly brought together in a single sentence. But the genuineness of the passage is very doubtful.

LECTURE II

THE SCRIPTURE GERM—CHOICE, TREATMENT

TAKING up again the topic under discussion at the close of the last lecture, we may consider the choice of texts

3. As to Language.

(7) Generally speaking, it is an advantage that the text should be a *plain, perspicuous passage*,—an immediate communication to the hearer. But some of the best texts are hard to interpret, and we are not to reject them on this account. "Idleness," says Wesley, "has eaten out the heart of half our preachers." One of its common forms is the looking round lazily for some Scripture verse that is easy to make a sermon on. But it is not always the land most easily plowed that yields the finest crop, or the straight-grained stick of wood that makes the hottest fire. *Study* the text to which you are somehow drawn, but which seems strangely evasive or unyielding. Ere long it may furnish you a sermon more original and more forcible than did any of its predecessors. Do not fancy, however, that you are ready to preach from such a text—or any other—till it has become entirely clear to your own mind.

(8) A large part of the Bible is marked by great *pathos, or beauty, or sublimity of language*. Shall these qualities have any influence in determining the selection of texts? A few hints will suffice to put the question fairly before you.

(*a*) Passages of this sort may or may not be rich in materials

of preaching. The Messianic prophecy of Isaiah, "And a man shall be as an hiding-place from the wind, and a covert from the tempest; as rivers of water in a dry place, as the shadow of a great rock in a weary land," is not only extremely beautiful in expression, but easily susceptible of homiletic treatment. But a similar utility could hardly be affirmed of this equally beautiful description of the millennial glory: "Thy sun shall no more go down; neither shall thy moon withdraw itself: for the Lord shall be thine everlasting light, and the days of thy mourning shall be ended" (Isa. lx. 20). It would be hard to find in all literature a more sublime passage than Revelation xx. 11, but do you find in it suitable materials for a sermon? Read the twelfth verse: "And I saw the dead, the great and the small, standing before the throne; and the books were opened; . . . and the dead were judged out of the things which were written in the books, according to their works." Here is hardly less sublimity, and how much greater fertility of homiletic thought!

Dr. R. W. Dale has given an interesting account of a sermon that he heard on the words, "We all do fade as a leaf":

"The little chapel in which it was delivered was in the lake country. The ferns on the hills and the woods below were taking their autumn tints of brown and gold. It was only necessary to step outside, and the beautiful country was a far more perfect and affecting sermon on the text than any mortal lips could deliver. For five or ten minutes, however, the preacher, who was a lady, succeeded admirably. She had caught the sentiment of the text, and her quiet, gentle manner was in harmony with the pathos of her words. But then the vein was worked out, and the rest of the sermon was a series of colorless commonplaces. This was not the preacher's fault. The beauty and pathetic power of the text are derived from the perfection of the poetical form in which the brevity and decay of human life and strength and glory are expressed. A sermon on a text like that should be a prose poem, but the

theme hardly admits of sufficient variation to permit the poem to expand to the ordinary length of a sermon."

(*b*) Gifts and acquirements differ. A subject suitable for one preacher is not necessarily suitable for another, nor for the same man in a different period of his ministry. Some men can treat the most profound texts successfully—some *few* men. So, likewise, with respect to the most pathetic or the most splendid passages. The only time I have had the pleasure of hearing Dr. Moses D. Hoge his text was Revelation v. 13; and the sermon, not elaborate or profound, but fervid, illustrative, eloquent, joyous, moved steadily along from first to last on the plane of that lofty doxology. A favorite text with young preachers is the grand thanksgiving chorus of the redeemed over the destruction of Antichrist and the final consummation of the Redeemer's kingdom: "Alleluia! for the Lord God omnipotent reigneth." Why not be satisfied, for the first few years of your ministry at least, with some such parallel passage as "The Lord reigneth; let the earth rejoice" (Ps. xcvii. 1)? An intelligent and godly congregation would, in almost every case, be pleased to hear you announce this rather than that.

(9) Among the painful peculiarities of the pulpit is the announcement of texts which, as such, make the impression of *oddity or grotesqueness*. This poor affectation, I am happy to say, is less common than formerly. The good sense, good taste, and sincerity of the Christian preacher will usually lift him above it. Of simplicity and fresh thought we shall never have too much; of clownishness it is impossible to have too little.

(10) Generally speaking, an *unfamiliar text is preferable*. It arrests the hearer's attention at the outset by the promise of some new presentation of truth. The exposition of it enlarges appreciably his knowledge of the Scriptures. Not only so, but the sermon is more likely to be the preacher's own,—to have in it all the flavor and force of his personality.

Nevertheless, freshness and originality in the sermon depend on the preacher rather than on his subject; and as to the subject or text, such a suggestion as that of Dr. Broadus is very pertinent: "What has made some texts familiar to all, but the fact that they are so manifestly good texts?" Many things are familiar because *common*, and God has made them common because of their superlative value,—the common air, the common sunshine, the common earth, our common humanity, the common salvation proclaimed in the Gospel. Is it not so with certain great utterances of our Lord, and with other great words of truth? They have become the inheritance of the multitude. By far the larger part of the Bible is known to very few, but we should rejoice that these great and supreme truths are commonly known. In them the Gospel is condensed, epitomized, radiant. "This verse," said Neesima, the first native apostle of Japan, speaking of John iii. 16, "is the sun among all the stars which shine upon the pages of God's holy Word." They will shine in the pulpit as in the Bible, these fittest and richest themes of preaching, to the end of time.

4. As to the Contents of texts.

(11) It is plain enough that we should prefer such as are distinctively *significant and fruitful.* In the ministry of a lifetime we shall not exhaust the hundredth part of this class of Scriptures; why, then, use those that are not equally well adapted to our purpose?

True, we cannot preach too specifically. Christian doctrine should be set forth in many aspects and in all its diverse applications to the individual life. But it by no means follows that each of these must form the theme of a separate discourse. In preaching on the subject of paying debts, for example, we do not need to devote the entire sermon to this one phase of Christian morality. Take as your text, "Owe no man anything, but to love one another" (Rom. xiii. 8). Your theme is "The Unpayable Debt," but in connection with this the duty of discharging the debts that can be fully paid may be

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all the more effectually enforced. It may be incumbent on you to apply the principles of the Gospel to such subjects as dress, cleanliness, good manners, accomplishments; but your general subject will be "Personal Influence," or, it may be, "The Christian Purpose in Pleasing One's Neighbor" (Rom. xv. 2). It may be your duty to rebuke such bad habits as misbehavior in church, or punning on the words of Scripture; and this may be done very impressively in a sermon on "Reverence for Sacred Things." Justice and kindness to animals are much-neglected duties even in our Christian civilization, and may properly constitute now and then the theme of a whole discourse. But more frequently and more effectively, perhaps, we may set them forth as specific forms of the general duties of justice and kindness. Our humble non-human servants themselves, could they speak in their own behalf, would doubtless plead for both these methods of presenting their cause.

Again, many passages that are too specific to be used as whole texts may be treated directly and distinctly as parts of longer texts, especially in expository preaching.

It is hardly necessary to add that none of the counsels here offered must be so construed as to encourage a disposition in the beginner to attempt sermons on the most profound and far-reaching passages of the Bible. I knew a young preacher whose first text was, "And in the days of those kings shall the God of heaven set up a kingdom, which shall never be destroyed," etc. (Dan. ii. 44). What could he hope to say, with his very limited range of thought and reading, on such a subject? Spend your strength on great themes; choose distinctively fruitful texts; but do not be ashamed to acknowledge that some declarations of Scripture are as yet beyond your pulpit powers.

(12) What shall we say of texts as *fragmentary or complete?* In one sense the great majority are fragmentary; that is to say, they express only a small part of the author's mean-

ing. This flows on unbroken through many verses or paragraphs. But any declarative sentence, whether compound, complex, or simple, may be regarded as representing a single complete idea. An interrogative sentence, however, if answered by the author himself, does not, without its answer, give a complete idea. When, e.g., the apostle James asks, "What is your life?" (iv. 14), the thought waits for complete expression in the declarative answer, "For ye are a vapor, that appeareth for a little time, and then vanisheth away." Ought such an interrogation to be used alone as a text, and the preacher's own answer be given? I should say not. The sermon would be something entirely separate and apart from the idea of the passage.

But the question of completeness and incompleteness relates mainly to the use of parts of sentences as texts. These may be divided for our present purpose into clauses, phrases, mutilated sentences, and single words.

Undoubtedly a clause may be used as a text. In fact it is largely a matter of literary form whether an idea shall be attached to another in the form of a clause or shall be expressed as a simple sentence. In the latter case its use as a text would be approved without the least hesitation; why not, then, in the former?

The same may be said of a phrase. It may often be readily substituted by a clause or a sentence. Take, e.g., the words, "Joseph of Arimathæa, being a disciple of Jesus, but secretly for fear of the Jews" (John xix. 38). The idea here is no less complete than if it had been written, "Joseph of Arimathæa, who was a disciple of Jesus," etc., or, "Joseph of Arimathæa was a disciple of Jesus," etc. Take as another example Romans xii. 10–13. Here we have one imperative sentence and nine phrases. But all might have been expressed, without any essential change of meaning, imperatively. Indeed, in the Greek the grammatical form of them all is the same.

The fact that a Scripture truth appears in the form of a

phrase is no reason, then, for refusing its use as a text. It may be very rich in meaning and suggestiveness; it may set forth a great theme more strikingly than this theme is presented elsewhere. Where shall we find better texts on experimental and practical religion than some of the phrases in the last-cited example? What sweeter and grander theme than the words, "The God of my life" (Ps. xlii. 8); or, "The exceeding greatness of His power to us-ward who believe (Eph. i. 19); or, "The light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ" (2 Cor. iv. 6)? All depends on the contents of the phrase. The objection to such texts as "Faint, yet pursuing," "When I was a child," and the like, is not that they are fragments, but that they are not homiletically fruitful. If through a change of form they should become sentences, they would still be unsuitable.

By a mutilated sentence is meant one in which, though it be grammatically complete, something necessary to the true sense has been omitted. It need hardly be said that such a fragment, perverted and misleading, is not a text of Scripture at all. The words "Have respect of persons" (James ii. 9) and "Glorying is evil" (James iv. 16) are examples.

The omission of intervening words may also be described as the mutilation of a sentence. E.g., you announce, "My text is Revelation ii. 2: 'I know thy patience.'" The passage as written is, "I know thy *works, and thy toil and* patience." Have you the right to leave out the intervening words? Certainly not. Read continuously from your starting-point; then cal attention to the particular part of the passage which you propose to discuss.

Still another way in which a sentence may be so mutilated as to become unfit for use as a text is by leaving out words which, while not strictly necessary to the true sense of those announced, are yet vitally and significantly connected with them. Such texts, e.g., as "Ye are saved" (Eph. ii. 5) and "Ye will keep My commandments" (John xiv. 15) are broken

off so suddenly from their connections, and can be treated so much more effectually as parts of the larger truths in which they appear, that no sufficient reason can be urged for their use as subjects of sermons. A still plainer example is the words, "Ye ask, and receive not, because ye ask amiss" (James iv. 3). The apostle here uses the word "amiss" with a definitely restricted meaning, which he immediately states in an explanatory clause, "that ye may *spend it in your pleasures*." To leave out this clause and give one's own meaning to the word—showing this and that fault in our prayers, through which they are made unfruitful—is "handling the Word of God deceitfully." On the other hand, if the apostle's line of thought as expressed in the omitted clause be followed, either in part or wholly, then this clause should not be omitted from the text.

As to texts consisting of a single word, they are only *so-called.* Mr. Moody's sermon entitled "Good News," for which the word "The Gospel" (1 Cor. xv. 1) is announced as the text, is really a sermon or address without any text at all. Why announce 1 Corinthians xv. 1 rather than any other of a hundred passages in which this same great word occurs with equal significance? The announcement is only a polite bow to an established custom,—a form which, losing its idea, forfeits thereby its justification and lapses into formality.

Just two general suggestions concerning the use of fragmentary texts. (*a*) Let the preacher read to the congregation, either on announcing the text or afterward, not simply the text itself, but also the immediate context, showing the connection of thought, and then ask that attention be confined to the selected words. (*b*) Let him choose a complete sentence rather than a fragment when practicable. The more comprehensive our knowledge of holy Scripture, the deeper our reverence for its teachings, the more truly philosophic our modes of thought, the stronger will be our instinctive preference

for fullness and completeness of meaning in the inspired words out of which we bring to men the unsearchable riches of Christ.

III. **The Methods of Treatment.**

The type of the plant is in the seed. While growth is not the mere unfolding of a germ, but an indefinable process of life, in which new parts and organs appear from time to time, yet the final form of the plant, the *class*, is determined, whatever modifications may be made through soil and climate, by the nature of the seed itself. But we must not expect the analogy to hold good at this point between plants and sermons. The form or species of the sermon depends partly, indeed, on the text, but chiefly on the mode of treatment to which this Scripture is subjected.

It is the method of treating the text, then, that determines the form of the sermon. Now let us specify.

1. The least use that we can make of a text is to draw from it a theme only. In such a case we call the sermon *topical*. If an exposition of the text be given, it is given in the introduction and for the purpose of disengaging the theme. This done, the text is dropped, and it does not reappear. The discussion from beginning to end is independent of it.

Frequently the theme is distinctly stated. In other cases it is more or less obscurely and tentatively expressed, as if the preacher either were not quite certain concerning it himself, or chose for some reason to give his hearers only a paraphrase of the sharply-cut proposition in his own mind.

Phillips Brooks, whose sermonizing is for the most part on the topical method, will furnish us good examples. Here are some brief and unequivocal statements of his themes: "This is the truth of which I wish to speak to you to-day,—the perpetual revelation of God by human life"; "The joy and glory of self-sacrifice shall be our subject"; "We may call our subject the nature and method of the growth of Christian character"; "I want to speak to you this morning of the

manliness of Christ." But sometimes he makes no one clear and definite statement of his theme, as, for instance, in the admirable discourse entitled "The Man of Macedonia" (Acts xvi. 9). Here, after showing that the vision did not mean that the people of Europe were wishing and actually asking for the Gospel, but that they had the capacity for it and the imperative need of it, he continues: "And is not this a very noble and a very true idea? It is the unsatisfied soul, the deep need, all the more needy because the outside life, perfectly satisfied with itself, does not know that it is needy all the time,—it is this that God hears pleading. This soul is the true Macedonia. And so this, as the representative Macedonian, the man of Macedonia, brings the appeal. How noble and touching is the picture which this gives us of God! The unconscious needs of the world are all appeals and cries to Him. He does not wait—" And so on through a whole paragraph, expressing suggestively and variously the truth which he proposes to speak about, and assuming that the hearer, without direct information, will recognize it as such.

2. But as often as otherwise we get not only our theme, but also its subordinate topics, or divisions, from the text. These are then treated after the ordinary manner of oratorical amplification, and we have the *textual* sermon.

The divisions may be given in the text either explicitly or by implication. As illustrative of the first case let us take such a passage as 1 Peter i. 24, 25,—finding in it, as our line of treatment, "The Frailty of Man and the Stability of the Gospel." Here the two divisions lie plainly on the surface of the text. As an example of that large class of texts in which the divisions are not immediately apparent, take the words of our Lord in Matthew xxv. 23. The theme, "The Reward of Christian Service." The divisions: (1) The particular quality of our work for Christ which makes it rewardable, viz., its fidelity. (2) The relation of the reward to the service,—they are of the same nature. (3) The suitableness of the re-

ward,—the admission of the good and faithful servant into participation in his Lord's joy.

Not infrequently some of the divisions are given explicitly, while others are more or less obscurely implied in the language of the text. Take as an example the last verse of the Epistle of James. Its theme, "The Greatness of Conversion," may be developed as follows: (1) The sinner is in error. (2) The way of error leads to death. (3) The sinner may be converted. (4) He who succeeds in converting the sinner accomplishes two great works: (*a*) he saves a soul from death; (*b*) he hides a multitude of sins. Here the last division is stated, while the other three are plainly implied in the text.

It is evident that for the homiletic use of the first-mentioned class of passages no special skill is necessary. It is in seeking out the half-revealed and half-concealed truths that the finest power of interpretative insight may be employed. The mere casual observer may gather up the outcropping ore, but to sink the shaft requires somewhat of the miner's wisdom and art.

Sometimes divisions are found in the context, as, e.g., in the case of the epitome text; or even in the remote context. In Dr. Deems's sermon on "Characteristics of a Sinful Life" (Rom. vi. 21) the author gets three divisions from the text and the fourth from the immediate context: (1) Its barrenness; (2) its *slavery;* (3) its shamefulness; (4) its destructiveness. Or take as an example the following:

Text: "I have waited for thy salvation, O Lord" (Gen. xlix. 18).

Divisions: 1. There may be this waiting attitude of the soul in a person who is far from being a perfect character.
2. Gives inspiration and strength.
3. The salvation is made known again and again.
4. Is fully realized at last.

Here the divisions are drawn from the whole life of the patriarch who speaks, in the text, from his death-bed.

The sermon constructed on this method is *contextual*, and it may be regarded as a variety of the textual.

Note, also, that when subdivisions are employed these likewise may be found in the text. But this is by no means a requirement of the textual sermon. It is most likely to occur when the main divisions are very general in character and few in number. F. W. Robertson's sermon on "The Parable of the Sower" is a good example:

Text: Matthew xiii. 1–9.
Divisions: 1. The causes of failure:
(1) Want of spiritual perception—"the wayside."
(2) Want of depth in character—"stony places."
(3) Dissipating influences—"thorns."
2. Requirements for permanence of religious impressions:
(1) Sincerity—"an honest and good heart" (Luke viii. 15).
(2) Meditation—"keep it" (Luke viii. 15).
(3) Endurance—"with patience" (Luke viii. 15).

Now it is evident that the texual treatment of a text offers less liberty as to the range of discussion than does the topical. The one marks out a path for us; the other gives only a starting-point. Hence the topical method is chosen when we wish to pursue a different line of thought from what seems possible under textual divisions. It is favorable also to a fuller and better unitized development of the theme. The textual treatment, on the other hand, is more expository and usually more interesting and suggestive.

3. There is also a combination of the topical and the textual method that is worthy of consideration. In this mode of sermonizing the thoughts which constitute the divisions are found partly in the text and partly otherwhere. It may be called the *textual-topical* method. Examples are too abundant, but one will suffice for illustration. In Richard Watson's sermon on "The Reign of God" (Ps. xcvii. 1) he says: "The text calls us to consider: (1) The subjects of the divine government. (2) Certain characters which mark the administration of the

world. (3) Those proofs of the doctrine that 'the Lord reigneth' which late occurrences have furnished. (4) The demand which is made upon our grateful joy: 'Let the earth rejoice.'" Here the fourth division is drawn from the text; the others are simply divisions of the theme. This last division, indeed, is properly the theme of the text, which is a passage inviting topical rather than textual development.

Ordinarily this composite method of treatment had better be avoided. The wholly topical or the wholly textual method is more stimulating, more promotive of symmetry of discourse, and less liable to degenerate into useless elaboration and excessive length of discussion.

Read chapter iii., "Of the Text," in Vinet's "Homiletics."

LECTURE III

EXPOSITION—PRINCIPLES

THE delivery of sermons is not coextensive with preaching, but is only its full-volumed form. There are other homiletic products, such as the exhortation, the lecture, the Scripture exposition. The sermon differs from these in unity of idea and elaborateness of structure. It is the possession of these two qualities that entitles a persuasive deliverance of Scripture truth to be called a sermon.

The Salvationist stands amid a group of wretched men and women in the slums and says (to quote a typical instance): "You are wrong. You know you are. All this misery and poverty are a proof of it. You are prodigals. You have got away from your Father's house, and you are rebelling against Him every day. Can you wonder that there is so much hunger and oppression and wretchedness allowed to come upon you? In the midst of it all your Father loves you. He wants you to return to Him,—to turn your backs upon your sins, abandon your evil doings, give up drink and the service of the devil. He has given His Son to die for you. He wants to save you. Come to His feet. He is waiting. His arms are open. I know the devil has got fast hold of you, but Jesus will give you grace to conquer him. He will help you to master your wicked habits and your love of drink. But come to Him now. God is love. He loves me. He loves you. He loves us all. He wants to save us all." Now this

may not be a sermon—it is not; but it is the preaching of the Gospel. To exhort with the power of the Holy Spirit is to preach; to deliver a sermon without it is not. Jesus said to a man who had just professed to be His disciple, "Go thou and publish abroad the kingdom of God" (Luke ix. 60). What sort of sermon could he have constructed?

But in the study of preaching upon which we have entered it is almost exclusively with the preparation and delivery of sermons that our attention shall be engaged; for this will practically include the whole subject.

Let us inquire, then, first of all, what are the processes through which, out of the germinant Scripture truth, the sermon is developed?

What one of them must be we have already seen. In fact, the name by which I have called the text implies that the very fundamental process—in a sense, the whole process—in the development of the sermon, is exposition. It often constitutes the introduction; in textual preaching it furnishes a line of interpretative statements ("divisions"); and in some cases the discourse is so largely made up of exposition as to be called, by way of distinction, *expository*.

The Bible is a recorded testimony. In it men tell us what they have seen in the kingdom of God: "The witness is this, that God gave unto us eternal life, and this life is in His Son. He that hath the Son hath the life; he that hath not the Son of God hath not the life" (1 John v. 11, 12). "Verily, verily, I say unto thee, We speak that we do know, and bear witness of that we have seen" (John iii. 11). In Christian preaching the written record of this testimony of chosen witnesses, and, above all, of Jesus the Christ, is read and expounded.

More specifically the Bible is a book of facts, doctrines, and precepts. The facts constitute the history of our redemption in Christ,—in the Old Testament the long and progressive preparation for it, and in the New Testament its actual accomplishment in the Incarnation and the Cross of our Lord. Its

doctrines are the divine truths of which these facts are the expression; its precepts are the law of righteousness given of God for the government of conduct in accordance with these stupendous facts and truths.

"Let a man so account of us," says the apostle Paul, "as of ministers of Christ, and *stewards of the mysteries of God*" (1 Cor. iv. 1). A "mystery," in the Apostle's use of language, is a spiritual truth heretofore hidden from the human understanding, or at the best vaguely hinted by types and half-understood prophecies, but now unveiled to all who receive the Gospel. The supreme and all-comprehensive mystery is the redemption of mankind by the death and mediation of our Lord Jesus Christ. To the first disciples this revelation was made through the senses (1 John i. 1–3) and through divine illumination (Matt. xvi. 17; John xvi. 13). To Paul it was made through divine illumination, without the knowledge of Christ according to the flesh (Gal. i. 15, 16). To them all it was committed as a *trust*. The use they were required by the Master to make of it was to bear witness concerning it to others. Their testimony finally took a permanent outward form in the Gospels and the Epistles; and these precious writings, through the providence and the Spirit of God, have been intrusted to us, who are likewise to be "accounted as ministers of Christ, and stewards of the mysteries of God." May we not expect, then, that a large part of our duty shall be to expound the inspired record, the Scriptures, in which this revelation of God in Christ is contained? We find, accordingly, that in the humblest house of preaching, whatever else may be lacking, the Book of Testimony, like the ark and the Law in the most holy place of the tabernacle, is always there; so that the Christian preacher, like many other instructors, has a Book before him out of which to teach.

"And who is sufficient for these things?" It would be hard to overstate the requirements in knowledge, sagacity, sympathy, spiritual insight, labor. But is it not so in every

work of the Lord? Doing what we can, we need not be disheartened at the pressure upon us of an infinite duty; for it is equally the touch of an infinite power and help.

By all means let us learn to read our New Testament with facility in the language in which it was first written. It is delightful to do mining for one's self "in the primary and auriferous rock of Scripture." I would not, indeed, set before you the aim of critical scholarship. This you will probably never have time for. But a literary knowledge of New Testament Greek, or even less than this, will do you incalculable service. Let experience decide. Ask those who have made the Greek Testament their constant companion during the years of their ministry.

As to Hebrew, my personal knowledge is so limited that I feel incapable of giving first-hand counsel; and neither here nor elsewhere would I offer any other. Not, of course, that there can be the slightest doubt of the value of Hebrew to any reader of the Old Testament; for the difference between having access to an original language and reading a translation is about the difference between seeing a thing for yourself and being told of it by others. But the practical question of the ministerial student is, Will it be expedient for me, with my mental equipment and in my circumstances, to undertake to become a Hebraist? In answer to such a question I do not hesitate, at least, to say that those who have a good opportunity to learn Hebrew in their preparation for the ministry, and fail to do so, or after having gained a reading knowledge of the language lose it through neglect, seem to be inexcusable.

Then do not grudge the effort necessary to acquire such exegetical scholarship as may be needful. Meanwhile make good use of what you already possess, however small it may be. It will illumine, not the obscurest passages, perhaps, but, what is of greater importance, the plainer ones. "A little learning is an *excellent* thing,"—not only good in itself, but promotive of the desire for more. If your knowledge of

Greek extend only to the first letter of the alphabet, it will help you to understand one of our Lord's greatest sayings concerning Himself; and if you have Hebrew enough only to explain the reference in Matthew v. 18, it is worth having. Do not be discouraged for a moment at your ignorance. It is an imperfection that will cast its shadow over the whole of your life and make itself felt more and more—if you keep on learning. But be faithful in that which is least, and you shall have great riches,—remembering always that the ultimate aim, the fulfilment of your commission, is not to become a scholar, but to become a teacher and preacher of Jesus Christ. "Apply yourselves wholly to this one thing, and draw all your cares and studies this way."

Do you find satisfaction in reading the Scriptures? Do you read them, or only eulogize them? There is much unintelligent laudation of the Bible. People set it above all other books, but do not take the pains so to read it as to make it really enjoyable and helpful. Take, e.g., First Corinthians. Read a chapter or two to-day, a similar portion to-morrow, and so on to the end of the epistle, without explanatory reading, without study, without interpretation. The result, both in pleasure and profit, will be small. But try a different method. Read the book as a *book*, the epistle as an *epistle*. Consider who wrote it, to whom, and why. Look into the Acts of the Apostles; consult some "Life" of Paul; make intelligent use of a good commentary. Follow out the teaching through passage after passage, from the superscription to the closing salutations; let it sink down into your spirit as well as enter your intellect; and you will find in this pastoral letter of Paul to his gifted and fervent but contentious Corinthian converts both an interesting picture of human experience and a living word of God. In like manner each book of the Bible, thus really *read*, will make its rich and distinct contribution to your treasure of Scripture knowledge.

I. Some Principles of Exposition.

It is not my province to teach the general subject of biblical interpretation, but I may properly call your attention to a few leading principles, with special reference to their homiletic utility.

1. The most comprehensive principle of all is, that the exposition of Scripture, like the exposition of any other writing, should be *natural and reasonable*. The presumption is that the words, whether of the original or a translation, are to be understood in their ordinary sense, according to the usage of the language. When used in a technical sense—e.g., the terms "justification," "the flesh," "the world," and others in the Epistles—the interpretation is to be learned by a careful comparison of the passages in which they are found. Indeed, all the chief words of the Bible are charged with a fullness and depth of meaning that does not belong to them in any other literature. But in every case the question is not, What does this passage suggest? but, What does it mean? Not, What does it suit my purpose or wish to have it mean? but, What *does* it mean?

(1) *A figure of speech is not to be flattened out into literalness.* We know this to have been a frequent blunder of our Lord's hearers, even of the chosen and instructed Twelve. Jesus said, "Except a man be born anew, he cannot see the kingdom of God"; and Nicodemus replied, "How can a man be born when he is old?" He said, "If thou knewest the gift of God, and who it is that saith to thee, Give Me to drink; thou wouldest have asked of Him, and He would have given thee living water"; and the woman of Samaria asked Him, "Sir, Thou hast nothing to draw with, and the well is deep: from whence then hast Thou that living water?" He said, "Take heed and beware of the leaven of the Pharisees and Sadducees"; and the disciples "reasoned among themselves, saying, We took no bread."

Martin Luther says, with reference to the Lord's Supper, "I have not yet decided whether water should be mixed with

the wine, although I am inclined to have pure wine prepared without mixing it with water, since the expression given in the first chapter of Isaiah restrains me: 'Your wine,' he says, 'is mixed with water'" (Isa. i. 22). Does this passage offer any foundation for his scruple?

I know a man of no mean intellectual ability who remarked, after reading the Pilgrim's Progress faithfully through, that he "saw nothing in it." An unpoetic mind is slow to perceive double meanings. It cannot speak in parables, and cannot sympathize with the imaginative thought of those that do. Recognizing a metaphor or an allegory, such a mind will probably say, "That is only a figure," whereas it would often be truer to say, "That is *even* a figure,"—a word of larger significance than the literal word. Through lack of this poetic sensibility, or through less worthy causes, the theological mind has often insisted on a literal rendering of metaphorical language. The colossal example is that of the Church of Rome founding her dogma of transubstantiation on the declaration of our Lord at the Last Supper: "This is My body. . . . This is My blood."

(2) *Literal statements are not to be perverted into metaphors and allegories.* Here again the first interpreters of the sayings of Jesus seem to have been at fault. When He predicted His sufferings and death they refused to take His words literally, probably supposing His meaning to be "that the present lowly form of His work was to die and disappear, and His cause to rise, as it were, out of the grave in a triumphant and glorious shape." And in this species of misinterpretation they had many predecessors and have had a vast multitude of followers. I once heard a venerable lay preacher say, "I have my own opinion about the preaching of John the Baptist in the wilderness of Judea: I think it refers to the wilderness state of the church." He might have gone further and, in no less distinguished theological company than that of Thomas Aquinas (whose works the present pope has recommended as

an antidote for the mental unrest of our day), have enjoyed his "own opinion" that John's camel's-hair clothing represented the church of the Gentiles, and that the locusts and wild honey which he ate signified that his preaching was to the multitude "sweet like honey, but short of flight like locusts." Similar *explanations* of Scripture have been offered by an unbroken succession of interpreters from the days of the cabalists, who found a mystic meaning in the separate letters into which they divided its words, even down to the present time. The patriarch Jacob, on his way to Haran, "lighted upon a certain place, and tarried there all night, because the sun was set," and there Jehovah appeared to him in a dream (Gen. xxviii. 10–22); the meaning of which experience, said Philo, is that not until the sun of reason has set can divine knowledge be obtained. "The sun knoweth his going down" (Ps. civ. 19): this, said the great Augustine, is to be understood of Christ, who knew beforehand the time of His death. "And it was told Laban on the third day that Jacob was fled. And he took his brethren with him, and pursued after him seven days' journey" (Gen. xxxi. 22, 23): this, said the Venerable Bede, represents the world pursuing the elect; and inasmuch as Laban means "whitened," he is also a "symbol of the devil transformed into an angel of light." "And Aaron and Hur stayed up his hands, the one on the one side, and the other on the other side; and his hands were steady until the going down of the sun" (Ex. xvii. 12): "the Israelites," says Wheatley, in his "Rational Illustration of the Book of Common Prayer," "could overcome the Amalekites no longer than Moses by stretching out his arms continued in the form of a cross; which undoubtedly prefigured that our salvation was to be obtained through the means of the Cross."

The biblical scholarship of our own day has not entirely rejected its inheritance from this school of allegorical exegesis, which was so popular and influential during long periods of the past. The Bible as it is not being spiritual enough for

some of our Christian teachers, they must "spiritualize" it for the greater edification of the people. Only this evening a friend told me that in a sermon to which he listened last Sunday, by an able and popular preacher, on the text "But lighting upon a place where two seas met, they ran the vessel aground" (Acts xxvii. 41), the words "where two seas met" were repeated from time to time as furnishing the theme of the discourse, which was "The Combination of Untoward Circumstances in Life," or something of that sort. From what other book would any authorized public teacher take "texts" and expound them after such a fashion?

Whatever this kind of dealing with the language of the Scriptures may be, it is not exposition: it does not set forth their meaning, but employs the written Word as a mere convenient starting-point for the *interpreter's* own nimble fancy,—so that he may go from anywhere to anywhere. It honors the Bible only as the stars are honored by astrology, with which branch of learning it may be scientifically classed.

(3) The popular and literary language of the Bible must be taken for what it is, and *not as having the precision of a scientific statement.* This principle needs to be constantly borne in mind. Bible phraseology is not that of the schools. It is characteristically that of every-day life,—idiomatic, suggestive, poetic, full of emotion, concrete rather than abstract.

For example: "That man was *perfect and upright*" (Job i. 1); "I have found David the son of Jesse, a *man after My heart*, who shall *do all My will*" (Acts xiii. 22); "Walking *in all the commandments* and ordinances of the Lord *blameless*" (Luke i. 6); "Let us therefore, as many as be *perfect*, be thus minded" (Phil. iii. 15). Is it meant that these men were absolutely flawless in character and filled with all possible spiritual goodness? A natural and reasonable interpretation of the language finds no such incomparable perfection ascribed to them.

"*Work not for the meat which perisheth*, but for the meat

which abideth unto eternal life" (John vi. 27). Are the toil-hardened hands of the farmer, then, a sign of disobedience to Christ?

"Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy *heart*, and with all thy *soul*, and with all thy *strength*, and with all thy *mind*" (Luke x. 27). Are we to suppose that some sharply discriminated power of our nature is referred to in each of these words?

"Pray *without ceasing*" (1 Thess. v. 17). Not *continuously* (cf. Rom. i. 9; 1. Thess. i. 3; ii. 13).

"*Give to him that asketh thee*, and from him that would borrow of thee turn not thou away" (Matt. v. 42). Note some complementary truth, such as 2 Thessalonians iii. 10.

"Am I seeking to please men? if I were still pleasing men, I should not be a servant of Christ" (Gal. i. 10). Here the complementary passage is 1 Corinthians x. 33.

Compare Matthew xii. 37 and Matthew xxv. 34–46.

(4) This principle is violated also through *theological prejudgments*. Not a few theologians have the knack of seeing in a passage of Scripture what may or may not be there, but in either case what they desire to find. Common sense, knowledge, insight, must all give way before a mind predetermined to pursue its course along a chosen line of thought. Not otherwise, surely, would any well-informed thinker be likely to find the doctrine of the Trinity in Genesis i. 1 and Isaiah vi. 3; or of total depravity in Isaiah lxiv. 6; or of the sinlessness of Christ in Luke xxiii. 4; or of sacramentarianism in 1 Corinthians iv. 1; or of universal salvation in 1 Corinthians xv. 22.

It would be hard to say which is the more objectionable, the allegorical method of interpretation, or this, the *eisegetical*. The former is more grotesque, the latter more sober and apparently reasonable; both are dishonoring to the Bible—as they would be to any book, even the humblest in the world—and injurious to the interpreter's own mind and morals. Both face in the

direction of the Jewish traditionalism, which did not hesitate to assert: "The words of the scribes are lovely above the words of the law; for the words of the law are weighty and light, but the words of the scribes are all weighty."

(5) *All straining and distorting of the Scriptures for homiletic purposes* must be avoided. There is no reference to the future punishment of the wicked in the words, "The wicked shall be turned into hell, and all the nations that forget God"; nor to the redemption of mankind by Christ in "the redemption of their soul is precious, and it ceaseth forever"; nor to the joys of heaven in "the things that God hath prepared for them that love Him"; nor to personal influence in "none of us liveth to himself." Nevertheless these and very many other merely apparent meanings are constantly employed, directly and indirectly, as if they were true, by religious teachers. Are these expositors in earnest to know what the Scriptures do mean and to use them for practical purposes accordingly?

It was by this sort of Scripture *argument* that Clement of Alexandria enforced the duty of family religion: "Our Lord said that where two or three are gathered in His name, there is the true church. Who are these two or three but the father, the mother, and the child?" Of a similar sort is the statement of Dr. Lovick Pierce, pressed with the desire to prove the duty of family worship by the letter of Scripture, that "the two conditions of domestic life called lying down and rising up [in Deut. vi. 6, 7] cannot mean anything else than family worship." One thing, among many others, we who have been sent forth by our Lord as Christian teachers should carefully observe: while ever increasing in the knowledge of the written Word, to keep truth at all times with such knowledge of it as we already possess.

(6) We must not fail to recognize *the local and temporary in the essential and eternal.* Each institution, each command, each book of the Bible, had first of all a meaning and purpose for the people to whom it was immediately given; and it may

be inapplicable, wholly or partly, to others. When the Psalmist says, "The Lord is my Shepherd; I shall not want," we have no hesitation in applying his words to all godly people; because he is speaking, not as a Hebrew, nor as a king, nor as one of "them of old time," but simply as a follower of God. No peculiarities of temperament, position, or circumstances have aught to do with this experience: it is purely human and spiritual. But when he says, "Bind the sacrifice with cords, even unto the horns of the altar," or, "Let them praise His name in the dance," it is only the passing forms of religion that he bids the people observe. So far from these being incumbent on us, it would be hurtful, and therefore wrong, to revive them. The principle is perfectly plain, but examples of its violation are numerous.

There are those who believe that the law of tithes is still obligatory upon the people of God (as if the exceeding broad commandment of entire consecration were not enough, even now that Christ has come); or that the Lord's Supper should be celebrated with unleavened bread; or that Christian baptism involves "going down into the water"; or that the seventh day of the week must still be observed as the day of rest; or that we "ought to wash one another's feet" and to "greet one another with a holy kiss"; or that because miracles were wrought in the beginning of the Gospel, the same attestation of its truth must be continued to the end of time. The Christian church for hundreds of years forbade its members to receive interest for the loan of money, because this practice was forbidden to the Hebrews of the theocracy in their dealing with one another. Calvin justified the judicial murder of Servetus with arguments "chiefly drawn from the Jewish laws against idolatry and blasphemy, and from the examples of pious kings of Israel." An Episcopal minister, in the mountains of Virginia, fell into company with a stranger, who said, "They tell me that ministers of your church don't speak to a man when they meet him in the road." He was assured that

it was an evil report. "But I tell them," he continued, "that if you don't you are only fulfilling the Scripture, '*Salute no man by the way.*'" All these interpretations, from Calvin's to the Virginia mountaineer's, must be classed together. They would make the circumstantial real and the temporary eternal.

The great New Testament example, tragic and appalling, is that of the Jews who would not give up the Old Testament rites and institutions, the law of Moses, even at the cost of rejecting the Cross of Christ, for whose sake Moses received his inspiration and wrote his books.

And now you are ready to say: "It is an impossible requirement. The literal is so interblended with the figurative, and the local circumstance with the universal principle, in the Scriptures, and besides, it is so difficult to get rid of infirmities and partial views—how am I always to tell just what the natural and reasonable interpretation of a passage is?" But consider: who has promised that you shall be able always to tell? Truth of all kinds is a gradual discovery and is attended with certain possibilities of error, just as the moral life is a growth and attended with possibilities of sin. It would be a very low idea of biblical interpretation that could be perfectly realized in a few months or years; but here is one whereunto you may continually advance as long as you live. And all the while you will be *living* indeed,—increasing in clearness of thought, depth of feeling, accuracy of conscience, faithfulness of will, and so becoming more and more a child of the light and of the day.

LECTURE IV

EXPOSITION—PRINCIPLES, EXPOSITORY SERMONS

TAKING up the principles of exposition for further study, I remark:

2. Scripture must be expounded *contextually*. Here again the reasonableness of the requirement is as evident as the frequency with which it is violated. It is often a just complaint of controversialists that opponents quote them unfairly,—giving their words, indeed, but not such other words as are necessary to bring out the significance of the quotation. How severely might the sacred writers rebuke many a Christian teacher for quoting words of theirs that appear only in some vital texture of thought, as if they were isolated aphorisms!

There are preachers that seem to act under the delusion that to take a text means to wrest it out of its connections in the Scripture and *take it away*, instead of simply *knowing* it where it is and for what it is.

The division of the Bible into chapters and verses, which, as we have seen, has encouraged an uninterpretative reading of it, has undoubtedly favored even more this bad exegetical habit. Accordingly here also the paragraphing of the Revised Version is helpful.

To prove the weakness of certain more or less common interpretations, nothing else is necessary than the careful reading of the immediate context. Would it not show, for example, that Psalm lviii. 3 does not teach universal depravity? that the

contrast in Luke xiii. 24–28 is not between "striving" and "seeking," but between making the effort to enter the kingdom of heaven now and making it when the day of grace is ended? that Christ does not command us in John v. 39 to "search the Scriptures," but reminds His unbelieving hearers that they do search the Scriptures to find in them eternal life, and inconsistently refuse to receive this life from Him? that Hebrews xi. 40 makes not the slightest reference to the intermediate state of the dead? that the invitation of "the Spirit and the bride" and of "him that heareth," in Revelation xxii. 17, is addressed to the Lord Jesus, and not to human souls?

Here is one source of what might be called the fallacy of proof-texts. Passage after passage is cited in support of some truth,—or error, as the case may be,—with but the faintest reference, or none at all, to the connection in which it appears. What sort of argument must that be in which modifying ideas and sequences of thought are ignored at every step? It is the abuse of a good method. For there is no better way of proving the truths of religion than by quoting Scripture testimony. Even a "Preacher's Text-book" or an "Analysis of the Bible," furnishing texts ready to hand on an extensive variety of topics, may occasionally be used to advantage. But a sensitive and instructed conscience would certainly require that we pay due regard to the ethics of quotation,—that we examine each passage for ourselves, to determine whether the apparent is the real meaning. And to the formation of such a judgment a knowledge of the context is indispensable.

Not only the immediate but the remote context, the scope and purport of the book and indeed the general tenor of Scripture teaching, must be taken into consideration. The expositor should always be able to say, as the example of our Lord suggests, "*Again* it is written." The Bible is one volume, but many books. The name is a transliteration, not of *biblos*, but of *biblia*,—not *book*, but *little books;* many in one,—a unity of elements and forces,—the same spirit, the same truth,

in different degrees and aspects, appearing as a progressive revelation in them all. The context of a passage, then, in the vital sense of the word, is very comprehensive. Contextual exposition requires acquaintance with the Bible as a whole. Especially does it require that we keep near in knowledge and love to Him in whom the revelation reached its final perfection, the Light of the world, whom, if any man follow, he shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life.

So if we read, "But I know that my Redeemer liveth, and that He shall stand up at the last upon the earth: and after my skin hath been thus destroyed, yet from my flesh shall I see God" (Job xix. 25, 26), we cannot believe the saintly patriarch to be here confessing his faith in "Jesus and the resurrection," when such an interpretation would be altogether out of touch with the rest of the book. If we read, "The dead praise not the Lord, neither any that go down into silence" (Ps. cxv. 17), we are not to be startled at this touching lamentation, as if it meant that death ends all, in the Book from which alone we get our knowledge of God and immortality. If Christ says to the young ruler, "Why callest thou Me good? there is none good but one, that is, God," we cannot understand Him to acknowledge a sense of personal unworthiness or sin, when His whole life, in word and deed, testifies that "He was manifested to take away sins, and in Him is no sin." If the apostle asks, "Hath not the potter a right over the clay, from the same lump to make one part a vessel unto honor, and another unto dishonor?" (Rom. ix. 21), we are not to conclude, Then the will of God is arbitrary and unmoral, and man is incapable of free action,—when the whole Scripture teaching, like the very heaven for clearness, shows His infinite righteousness and love, and when, on the supposition that man's sense of freedom is delusive, every burden laid by the Bible on the conscience is a mockery and a deceit. If we read in the Book of Kings of Elijah calling down fire from heaven to consume the soldiers that the Samaritan king had sent to arrest him, we

might suppose the man of God an example in this for all men of God in similar circumstances. But when we see the disciples of Jesus taking this very view of it, and asking Him concerning an inhospitable Samaritan village, "Lord, wilt Thou that we bid fire to come down from heaven and consume them?" and hear the rebuke with which He meets their proposal, we learn that the followers of the Son of man must be quick "not to destroy men's lives, but to save them." If we read the Psalmist's prayer for the destruction of his enemies, whatever we may learn from such imprecations, it is not a lesson of cruelty and hate, since the law of love to all men, friends and enemies, shows plainer and plainer in the Scriptures, till it shines like the sun from the face of Jesus.

The true exegetical method is that of biblical theology; and the most truly biblical exegesis will be the most truly Christological.

3. Exposition must be *spiritually true*. To miss the spiritual truth of the Bible, though we should learn perfectly everything else it contains, would be to miss that for which it all was written. It would be to mistake the embroidered purse for the silver and gold within. "Sin," "condemnation," "pardon," "righteousness," "communion with God," "the mind of Christ," "propitiation for sin,"—what do these words mean? No lexicon can tell us. The learning of a Delitzsch or a Lightfoot would be inadequate. No merely "natural" experience of life can interpret them. Yet if we do not know them we are assuredly unqualified for the pulpit, being ignorant of the elemental truths of the Christian religion.

How, then, are these things to be learned? Our Lord has answered the question: "The Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in My name, He shall teach you all things"; "He shall guide you into all the truth"; "He shall take of Mine, and shall declare it unto you." For it is to spiritual knowledge that this promise of the infallible Guide applies: not to the discovery of all mysteries and all knowledge,—the revolution

of the earth, the circulation of the blood in our veins, the association of ideas, the relative merits of the Calvinistic and the Wesleyan system of theology, the authorship of the Epistle to the Hebrews, the meaning of 1 Peter iii. 19, 20 (other provision has been made for these discoveries); but to the ever-enlarging knowledge of the life of God in the soul. It is that illumination for which Paul prays, out of the depths of his Christlike solicitude and love, in behalf of the Ephesian Christians: "That the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give unto you a spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of Him; having the eyes of your heart enlightened, that ye may know what is the hope of His calling, what the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints, and what the exceeding greatness of His power to usward who believe."

How does the Holy Spirit guide us into the truth? By quickening our own spiritual life and thus putting us into accord and sympathy with spiritual life wherever manifested. The roots of all knowledge are in personal experience. It is only from what we ourselves are that we can understand human nature. It is only in such measure as we have personally felt the pressure of sin on the conscience that we can know what sin is. So with the life of sonship and communion with God; so with all spiritual truth. A noble-hearted Christian layman said to me not long since: "I know it is more blessed to give than to receive as well as I know anything. No man need tell me; I have felt it many a time; there is a feeling when you do a kind act"—and so on. He knew that word of the Lord Jesus by the only satisfactory interpretation and evidence, the evidence of Christian experience. Imagine Luther expounding the Epistle to the Romans before he knew experimentally the truth of justification by faith. When Wesley was convinced out of the Scriptures that the true faith in Christ is attended by a sense of forgiveness and peace, he was inclined to believe that, inasmuch as he knew the doctrine

only, not the experience, he ought to give up preaching. "By no means," said his Moravian friend and teacher, Peter Bohler; "preach faith till you have it, and then because you have it you will preach it." In what sense could he preach it meantime?

A physiologist may hear a singer's words, and be able to explain the action of his vocal organs, and yet not know one tune from another. He may be tone-deaf,—like Dean Stanley, who would quietly make his apology and leave the room when Jenny Lind was about to sing. If God had put the spirit of song into his heart he would know. A rhetorician may scan and construe a poem, giving the correct technical name to each part, and yet be quite insensible to "the soul of beauty that makes it music and the soul of thought that makes it throb." If God had put the spirit of poetry into his heart he would feel the poem's power. In like manner it is only the man in whose heart is the kingdom of God, "righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Ghost," that can know the things of the kingdom.

It will appear in the exposition of the Scriptures in your pulpit whether you are familiarly acquainted with them and have "the power and drive of the whole Bible behind every sermon"; whether your knowledge of the text is not simply what you have gathered up for the occasion from the commentaries; whether your illustrations come through personal observation and contact with nature and human life; whether you are a thorough and candid thinker; but with equal evidence will it appear whether you are living from day to day as a son of God and are continually taught of Him.

So the word we preach is at the same time God's Word in the Scriptures and His present truth in our own hearts. If it be any other it were better that we tarry and wait till the true Christian evangel shall be given us. Doctrine becomes truly preachable only when converted into experience.

To despise linguistic learning, and fancy ourselves none the

worse off for having no share in the critical knowledge of the Scripture, does not show a spiritual mind. It is the contempt of ignorance, and its natural outcome is fanaticism. Through what toil of scholarship has every verse of the Bible been laid before us! Would it be no help to the understanding of Paul's Epistles to the Corinthians to have lived in Corinth at the time these letters were received, and to have read them for ourselves just as they came from his hand? The New Testament scholar is simply a man who is more nearly in some such position than is the ordinary reader. Learning puts us back, as far as may be, where the plain, unlettered hearers of Christ and His Apostles stood in their day. Herein is its distinctive value. But as between an unregenerate Corinthian of Paul's day, living for his lusts and knowing nothing but the wisdom of this world, though a reader of the Apostle's letters, and a spiritually minded Christian of America with only the English New Testament in his hand,—or, indeed, with no knowledge of books whatever,—undoubtedly the latter only would be truly instructed and prepared to teach the way of the Lord. "And ye have an anointing from the Holy One, and ye know all things" (1 John ii. 20).

One word more. We cannot hope to have this spiritual knowledge if unwilling to pay the price. We must submit to be led of the Spirit, however contrary to the desires of the flesh and of the mind. And the Spirit will lead us into the doing of God's will as the every-day business of life. Obey, *obey* the words of Jesus, and you will learn what they mean.

Moreover, suffering, keen and protracted, may be necessary. For it is often through the thick darkness that the soul is led into the fuller light of God. Said John Bunyan in prison: "I never had in all my life so great an inlet into the Word of God as now; insomuch that I have often said, were it lawful, I could pray for even greater trouble for the greater comfort's sake." Your prison-house will not be of the same outward sort as the Bedford jail, but it may be equally painful. In-

tellectual perplexity, secret griefs, the hand of death, the going out of earthly hopes one by one—it will perhaps be what you are now least expecting. But you need not ask to know. Only, when the time comes, do not draw back and rebel. Let the Father have His own way with you. Let there be prayer and wrestling and travail of spirit, if God will; let your heart bleed and break. I believe you to be Christian men, sincerely desirous of doing the highest good in the world. But it may be that you have never thought or felt very deeply. Your views of human nature and of divine revelation are comparatively superficial. Do you really wish to *know?* There is no theological seminary on earth in which that desire can be gratified. Probably it is only in the school of pain that you can make the truth really your own and so become interpreters of it to others. The way of the Cross is the way of light.

4. Is it necessary to add that the expository process in a sermon should be what the words themselves imply,—*homiletical?*

On the one hand, a certain amount and kind of explanation is demanded. No part of the text of which any use is made in the sermon should be left in darkness. A brother preacher once said to me, "I am going to preach from the words, 'Let us therefore draw near with boldness unto the throne of grace, that we may receive mercy,'" etc. (Heb. iv. 16). Having had the same passage in mind as a text, and not feeling sure of its meaning, I asked, "What do you take it to mean?" "Why, it means—*prayer*," was as definite a reply as he was prepared to make. Surely there is some specific significance in this inspired description of prayer. Similarly, in preaching from Colossians i. 12 ("Who made us meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light"), it is not enough simply to use the phrase "the inheritance of the saints in light" as synonymous with heaven. Under what particular aspect is the heavenly life here spoken of? Or, again, "a crown of life"—just what does this familiar New Testament

figure mean? I have often heard it preached about, but never explained.

On the other hand, there is a good deal of commenting in the pulpit that is homiletically useless. It occurs chiefly in the introduction of the sermon. And the reasons are obvious: it is abundantly supplied by the commentaries; it gives the preacher's mind a start (coming at a time when he has some doubt perhaps about finding enough to say); and it seems to lay down a solid basis of learning for the discourse. But the temptation must be resisted. In relating a narrative for proof or illustration, do we mention every detail, or only such circumstances as bear upon our purpose? Let the same wise economy be practised in exposition. Keep the application of the subject always in view, and from the first let there be intelligent movement toward this end. No irrelevant matter,—save the occasional side-flashes of impromptu thought, or occasional digression for some special purpose,—however true and excellent in itself. Very precious is time in the pulpit; why devote any of it to that which diverts or wearies attention instead of promoting the object before us?

Evidently, then, the preliminary processes in exegesis—the successive steps by which we have reached our conclusion as to the meaning of the text—are no proper part of preaching. The pulpit-desk is not the study-table. It is not the place for prosecuting exegetical inquiries, but only for announcing their results. Why refer to the readings of "some very ancient manuscripts," or the half-score of parallel passages that you have examined, or the views of various "authorities"? Why set forth any elaborate array of reasons for the interpretation you have to offer? Put the well-baked loaf on the table, and give no account of the buying or the baking.

In a word, nothing is good out of its place; therefore we must introduce into the sermon such exposition and so much as is necessary for the purpose in hand—no more and no other.

There are so many passages, especially in the Authorized Version, that are commonly misunderstood and misapplied that you will need to be on your guard against the popular misinterpretation. The following are examples: Genesis vi. 3; Numbers xii. 3; 2 Kings iv. 26; viii. 13; Psalm ii. 12; xlii. 2; xlv. 13; ciii. 9; Proverbs viii. 17; xxii. 6; xxv. 11; Ecclesiastes xi. 3; Isaiah lxiii. 3; lxiv. 6; Jeremiah iii. 4; Joel iii. 14; Habakkuk ii. 2; Haggai ii. 7; Zechariah ix. 10; John x. 16; Acts ii. 47; Romans viii. 15; xi. 29; xii. 11; xii. 19; xiv. 23; 1 Corinthians iv. 4; xv. 37; Galatians iii. 24; v. 4; Philippians iv. 5; Colossians ii. 21; 2 Timothy ii. 15; James i. 17.

II. Expository Sermons.

I have already said that sometimes there is so much exposition in a sermon that it may be called, by way of distinction, *expository*. Now the general principles of exposition apply, of course, to such a sermon, just as to any other. But in addition I would offer a few specific suggestions.

First of all, do not fear lest the larger use of Scripture in the pulpit, for which the expository sermon stands, should repel the people as a dry and out-of-date mode of preaching. Even if it should, duty might demand that you disregard their preferences; but it will not. The people are at least as likely to grow weary of your own reasonings and speculations. For although most persons read the Bible very little themselves, still they reverence its transcendent authority and know something of its treasures of truth, and in church they are ready to hear it expounded. They would rather the preacher should keep close to the words of psalmists, of apostles, of our Lord, and open out their meaning, than that he should needlessly multiply the distance between these words and his own. The distance will be great enough at best, for we have not the living presence of the sacred writers. We have not even their autographs; only through transcriptions and translations can we approach them. But the nearer our approach and the

greater our competence to explain their revelation of the mind of God, the more heartily will our claim to a hearing be acknowledged. And if we be not merely intelligent or scholarly, but also spiritually minded interpreters,—preaching the living Word that is in the written Word,—I cannot see how any form of preaching could be more real or quickening or impressive than the expository. Does Dr. Joseph Parker fail to apply the Gospel to the present circumstances and needs of men? does he fill an antiquated and unattractive pulpit? And yet the substance of his preaching for many years has been published in twenty-seven large volumes of exposition,—"The People's Bible."

Again, do not fear the lack of expository materials. It may seem to you now very difficult, on a text of moderate length, to find enough to say by way of exposition for a half-hour's discourse. But such a fear will seldom be realized. Read Leighton's exposition of the First Epistle of Peter. It is true to its title, a "Practical Commentary." The author does not leave the text to follow whatever good ideas it may incidentally suggest. He seems to be uniformly true to the principle acknowledged in his comment on chapter ii., verse 25: "Not to press the comparison, or, as it is too usual with commentators, to *strain it beyond the purpose*, in reference to our lost estate, this is all or the main circumstance wherein the resemblance with sheep holds,—our *wandering*, as forlorn and exposed to destruction, like a sheep that has strayed and wandered from the fold." And yet the exposition of the first chapter only would fill over a hundred and fifty pages. Your difficulty, when you have acquired some skill as an expositor, is likely to be other than the lack of materials. It will probably be the lack of willingness to leave out all that is homiletically unsuitable, and of facility in setting forth what remains in terse, vivid, and applicatory speech.

And now more particularly as to the expository sermon. Like any other sermon, it must have unity of idea and a more

or less elaborate structure. It is not a running commentary; it is not even such an exposition as many of Chrysostom's homilies or Robertson's Lectures on Corinthians. Some of these admirable productions are sermons; others, truer to their titles, are homilies or lectures.

The opinion that the expository sermon is simply a Scripture exposition of a certain required length, and not a truly synthetic discourse, has been encouraged by the erroneous practice of classing it as a coördinate species with the topical and the textual sermon. To distinguish it from the latter, it has been described as not requiring regular divisions, though in exceptional cases it may have them; whereas the real distinction is in the character of the subject-matter. It is as desirable that the expository sermon should have a distinctly stated proposition and distinctly stated divisions as that any other variety of the textual sermon should have them. Its sole distinctive feature is that the subject-matter is predominantly exegetical. Hence there is no more propriety in coördinating it with the topical and the textual sermon than there would be in thus classifying the argumentative, or the descriptive, or the illustrative, or the hortatory sermon.

Good examples may be found in Wesley's series of expository discourses on our Lord's Sermon on the Mount. The fifth of the series (on Matt. v. 17–20) has for its subject—not expressed in any one well-defined statement, but, according to Wesley's custom, plainly indicated—"Christianity Not a New Religion"; and each verse of the text is taken "for a distinct head of discourse." The sixth sermon is on "The Necessity of a Pure Intention in our Actions" (Matt. vi. 1–15); and the divisions are: "(1) With regard to works of mercy (verses 1–4). (2) From works of charity or mercy our Lord proceeds to those which are termed works of piety (verses 5–8). (3) After having taught the true nature and ends of prayer, our Lord subjoins an example of it (verses 9–15)." The divisions of the twelfth sermon, on "False Prophets" (Matt. vii. 15–20),

are preannounced as follows: "A caution this of the utmost importance. That it may the more effectually sink into our hearts, let us inquire, first, who these false prophets are; secondly, what appearance they put on; and thirdly, how we may know what they really are, notwithstanding their fair appearance."

Now a common defect in the biblical expositor, as we had occasion to note when considering the topic of contextual exposition, is the failure to recognize the continuity of thought. The tendency is to dislocate the body of truth at every joint; to detach from its connections every verse, every clause, that one is not compelled to take as part of a continuous discourse, instead of taking as part of a continuous discourse every verse or clause that one is not compelled to regard as disconnected. In a somewhat varied experience as to subjects of instruction, I have had less satisfactory work done by students in the exegesis of the New Testament than in any other subject; and of this work the least satisfactory part has been that of tracing out lines of thought in the discourses of our Lord and in the Epistles. Similarly in the pulpit the Bible as a whole—the particular book, the paragraph, even the text as a whole—seems frequently to have left but the slightest impression on the preacher's mind.

Here, then, is something to which special attention needs to be given in expository preaching. Select a text that has unity; set forth its generic idea, then the main sub-ideas of which this is made up, then their amplification,—just as in the case of any other textual sermon. In a word, do not let the predominance throughout of exposition impair the unity and order of the discourse. Remember, one great truth rising above all others brought into association with it, shining steadily on in this and that aspect, and with highest intensity at the last,—something of this sort must be your directive idea in the making of the sermon.

Let me illustrate with another example. Suppose the text

to be Colossians iv. 2–6. Here is a variety of topics,—prayer, watching, thanksgiving, preaching the Gospel, wise conduct toward the unconverted, redeeming the time, Christian conversation. And we can easily imagine an expository discourse that would simply open up and apply these various topics, showing little or no connection between them. But it is not thus that Dr. Maclaren treats the passage in "The Expositor's Bible." The subject of his sermon is given in its title, "Precepts for the Innermost and Outermost Life," and is set forth as follows: "These last advices touch the two extremes of life, the first of them having reference to the hidden life of prayer, and the second and third to the outward, busy life of the market-place and the street. That bringing together of the two extremes seems to be the link of connection here. . . . These two sides of experience and duty are often hard to blend harmoniously. . . . Here we may find, in some measure, the principle of reconciliation between their antagonistic claims. . . . Continual prayer is to blend with unwearied action. . . . 'Continue steadfastly in prayer,' and withal let there be no unwholesome withdrawal from the duties and relationships of the outer world, but let prayer pass into, first, a wise walk, and second, an ever-gracious speech." The divisions are: "(1) So we have here, first, an exhortation to a hidden life of constant prayer. (2) We have here, next, a couple of precepts, which spring at a bound from the inmost secret of the Christian life to its circumference, and refer to the outward life in regard to the non-Christian world, enjoining, in view of it, a wise walk and a gracious speech." And under these two main ideas, complementary to each other, every clause, phrase, word, of those five verses is skilfully introduced and forcibly expounded. The variety remains, but the unity also is made manifest.

And now, if you be inclined to ask, "Shall we always be governed by this principle of unity in expository discourse?" I will answer that the Christian preacher is not in bondage in

such a matter. If there be unity of feeling and purpose, this will often be sufficient. Take the sermons of the Rev. John McNeill, which are nearly all expository, as examples. Their author describes them as "inartistic, inelegant, structureless." But they are not so. Certainly they are by no means disjointed and scattering. The preacher is not thinking about "unity," but he is too much in earnest to be without a theme or to wander far from it. His text is his theme, and its different parts are taken up and expounded usually in the order in which they occur. These are his "divisions." He prefers a Scripture narrative, and pays more attention to its suggestions than to its teachings. But he so handles the text, with his evangelical determination and fervor, and his free, flaming, imaginative home-thrusts of speech, as to make the impression of it, one whole and strong impression, on the hearer's soul.

Then, again, if there should seem to be good reason for choosing a text in which you can perceive no unifying idea, enjoy your liberty—and *lecture*. This may occur in a series of expository discourses on a book of Scripture,—the limited time at your disposal requiring that you should sometimes *take two or more texts in one;* or it may occasionally be done for the sake of informality or of variety. But know at least what you are doing. Do not allow the ideal of the sermon to fall. Do not promote an exception to the rank of a rule. Do not forget that in the world of mind, as in nature, a unity is a higher form of being than a mass. Accustom yourself to logical—that is to say, correct—thinking, construct your discourses accordingly, and you may be trusted to use your liberty without abusing it.

Read Bernard's "Progress of Doctrine in the New Testament," Dr. Richard M. Smith's "Studies in the Greek New Testament."

LECTURE V

ARGUMENT—LIMITATIONS, POSITIVE PRINCIPLES

BESIDES exposition, there are other processes, each bringing in its appropriate material, in the making of the sermon; for the sprouting seed is not the tree. It is one of these that we are now to study.

First, however, I must remind you that the term *exposition*, which I have used in the sense of exegesis, is used in a much larger sense by writers on rhetoric. It is made to include all that in common language would be called *explanation;* that is to say, the exposition of topics as well as of writings. In this larger sense, also, it is evidently a homiletic process, and as such deserves attention. For the preacher must explain ideas, truths, and duties, as well as Scripture texts. The explanation of topics, however, enters so largely into certain other processes, to be treated later,—such as description, narration, illustration, division,—that it hardly seems to call for a separate treatment. Passing, therefore, from Exposition, let us take up the subject of Argument.

To reason is to draw inferences from knowledge of any sort already in our possession; and reasoning expressed in language is argument. It need hardly be said that this intellectual process, like all others, is performed, not by a gifted few, but by all rational minds. It is also evident that this is one of the processes in the development of the sermon. Finding certain statements in the Scriptures, certain facts in my own experi-

ence, and certain first principles of truth in my mind, I say, "These things being so, something follows,—this and that." It is thus that systems of theology, doctrinal and practical, are built up; it is thus, in part, that sermons are constructed.

Now the necessity that is upon us, in many instances, of reasoning in order to reach the truth is rather humbling than otherwise,—a sign of mental inertness and incapacity. It is taking the railway train to cross the continent, instead of flashing to our destination like the sunbeams. We are filled with admiration at the long series of calculations and deductions by which Newton made his sublime discovery; but what if he could have seen the whole truth at once, as with the glance of an eye? Intuition is better than logic, the seer greater than the logician. Still, as on many subjects the human intellect cannot rise above the necessity of reasoning, to reason well is a mark of comparative intellectual power and of influence over other minds.

Let us not expect too much from argument. To pursue a thorough and comprehensive course of reasoning, even in the track of a leader, is what very few hearers will submit to, and what few, indeed, are capable of. Besides, a man may be rationally convinced of the truths of religion while his heart remains indifferent and his will unconverted. But to slight and disparage the argumentative element of preaching on these accounts would be to depreciate a part because it is not the whole, or something because it is not something else. Conviction is not persuasion, but it is very often the basis, the necessary condition, of the persuasive appeal. In fact, it may of itself give rise to motives that do persuade; so that even an exclusively argumentative sermon might reach not only the intellect of the hearer, but also his heart and will. Moreover it is not always useless to prove to a man that which he already believes. The proof may confirm his belief by making it more reasonable and intelligent. You believed, for example, that the method of divine revelation is gradual;

but after reading Bernard's "Progress of Doctrine in the New Testament" you believed it more strongly. Your consciousness of the truth was brightened, your opinion solidified into conviction.

As to the popular idea that in evangelistic work only the fiery exhortation of a Whitefield or the sanctified common sense of a Moody is likely to be effective, it is noteworthy that the three chief revivalists of their day, Jonathan Edwards, John Wesley, and Charles G. Finney, were distinctively argumentative preachers.

There is, indeed, an undercurrent of argument, a continuity of thought, in all rational discourse. It is, for the most part, unconscious to both speaker and hearer—like the grammatical relations of the words. Conscious or unconscious, it must be there. For what is the very first requirement in planning a discourse but that its different parts shall be disposed in a natural, reasonable, logical order? Hence the development, or amplification, of its several divisions is by some writers called the "argument." The same name has been given to the outline of an elaborate poem, such as Paradise Lost. To have the successive parts of a discourse logically incongruous with one another is a blunder like that of anachronisms in a writer, or that of the school-boy artist in whose pencil sketches a rich man's mansion and an Indian wigwam appear in the same landscape. It is not necessary that such words and phrases as "therefore," "consequently," "by parity of reasoning," "from these considerations we infer," and so on, should occur, in order to disclose the presence of reasoning. A simple "so" or "then" may be the sign of it, and it may exist where no causal connectives, formal or informal, are used.

Often a single sentence will contain and suggest a whole argument, premises and conclusion,—its force concentrating, perhaps, in some one emphasized word. If you should say, e.g., "The *visionaries* expect success in the enterprise," the

thought conveyed in your one brief sentence would be that (*a*) clear-headed persons do not expect the enterprise to succeed; (*b*) where such persons do not expect success it is unlikely to occur; and (*c*) therefore the enterprise in question is in all probability doomed to failure.

An argument may even be condensed into a single logical term. Such an expression, e.g., as "the organism of society" is not only susceptible of a propositional form, but glows with the energy of argument. The force of it is, "Society is an organism; therefore"—whatever inference the analogy may seem to justify.

I. **Limitations.**

As already intimated, the argumentative element of the sermon moves within its own restricted sphere, which is not hard to recognize; and it may be worth while to spend a few minutes in noting more particularly some of its limitations.

1. *Formal argument, unlike exposition, is not distinctive of Christian preaching*,—even as it is not distinctive of the Bible. Much that we preach requires no proving to our congregations. It is already believed by them as biblical history or doctrine, and needs ordinarily but to be explained and enforced. Or its appeal is to the primary faiths of the human heart, the testimony from without being confirmed by that of the moral sense, the witness within. The preacher's attitude is not that of the advocate before the court so much as that of the ancient herald publishing the will of the sovereign; that of a teacher before his class; that of John the Baptist, a voice proclaiming the Holy and Mighty One, whom to know is to believe in. There may be much good reasoning in a sermon, but it is never to be forgotten that the chief note of Christian preaching is not argumentation, but *prophesying*.

In moral reasoning (which comprises not only the reasoning of the pulpit, but ninety-nine hundredths of all that is done in the world) there is always something that might be said on the other side. But in the preacher's audience no reply is per-

mitted. To substitute a debate for a sermon would shock the Christian conscience of any community. It is because the pulpit is felt to be, not distinctively for argument, but for teaching and testimony, for proclamation. As Vinet has said, "The privilege assured to the preacher of occupying the auditory by himself, of having to combat only silent adversaries, would be an exorbitant and absurd privilege if the preacher be not regarded as speaking in the name of God, and as repeating the oracles of inspired wisdom, in his developments and applications."

2. *Controversial sermons are to be regarded as rare exceptions.* As boy poets are inclined to try their hand first of all upon a tragedy or an epic, so young preachers sometimes begin their ministry with discourses on the evidences of Christianity, or with some other defense of fundamental truth. Put it off ten years, and then, should you omit it altogether, the full proof of your ministry will probably not be thereby hindered. The same remark applies, with added force, to sectarian controversies.

When the exception occurs, and such preaching becomes necessary, the preacher has special need not only of the competent scholarly and logical equipment, but of that wisdom which is from above,—that he may not be unfair or petulant, that he may not argufy instead of arguing, that he may not set victory and reputation above righteousness and truthfulness and truth. The bane of controversy is its tendency, except in the case of the noblest minds, to degenerate from the high inquiry, What is truth? into a petty wrangle as to who is right. The controvertist belittles himself, both as a thinker and as a man, by indulgence in such contentions. They belong to the same controversial order as the dispute of the disciples in the "upper room," on the night preceding their Lord's crucifixion, concerning personal preëminence in the church. No doubt each could give some good reason why he should be chief among his brethren; but the vanity and selfishness of it all!

"Hold the pattern of sound words which thou hast heard of me, *in faith and love which is in Christ Jesus*" (2 Tim. i. 13).

In a formal attack upon error from the pulpit the preacher must also remember that he runs the risk of disturbing more minds than he satisfies, by informing them of wrong notions whose very existence they have heretofore lived in happy ignorance of. Remember, any novel idea, whether rational or fanciful, has one attraction which to many minds is a fascination,—its novelty; and that no theory, argument, or belief will be regarded by your hearers as unworthy of consideration when their attention has been deliberately called to it in the pulpit. No wise minister would speak to his congregation of vices that were almost, if not altogether, unknown in the community, for the sake of proving that they are vices and showing their evil consequences. "The which I will not tell you, lest ye should do the like," said Hugh Latimer, with characteristic mother-wit, alluding to vicious practices prevalent in the village of his boyhood. Does not the principle apply equally well to doctrinal errors? Robert Hall sadly confesses that, after the delivery of a series of sermons on the doctrine of the Trinity, he was surprised to find that he had for the first time in his congregation a small party of Arians, of Sabellians, and so on. In other words he actually caused certain theological diseases by imagining their existence and attempting to cure them.

Incidentally and indirectly there should be much in your ordinary preaching to prove the truth of Christianity, and even of your own particular form of belief. This will be not only your commonest, but probably your most effectual, argumentation.

As to offensive personalities in controversy, the rhetoric of abuse, though once far from uncommon in the pulpit, there is but one class of men now from whom they should be expected, —those who have not the spirit of Christian gentlemen.

3. *All necessity of argument may be saved, in many instances,*

by a clear and accurate definition of terms. A large proportion of controversy is logomachy: it is only the words of the opposing parties that are at war, the ideas being substantially alike and peaceable. The remedy—and, better still, the preventive—is definition.

Let me illustrate. May a man know himself to be a child of God? "If one says he knows it, that of itself is good proof that he is not God's child." "On the contrary, if he cannot say he knows it, *that* is proof that he is not God's child." These are the two extreme positions—not to mention intermediate ones—on this momentous question of personal religion. But as between deeply experienced Christians, who are surely the persons best qualified to reach a definitive conclusion on the subject, let it be understood in what sense the word *know* is employed, and the controversy is over. Do we use it to express such certainty as attends the conclusion of a mathematical demonstration, the contrary of which is not only false, but impossible, or such as comes from a consciousness of filial love and trust toward God, and a course of conduct in harmony with this sense of divine sonship? Again: is conscience infallible? Let it first be determined what is included in the term *conscience.* Is it that which gives us the feeling of obligation, together with the judgment of individual acts as morally right or wrong? If so, we shall never be able to establish for conscience the claim of infallibility, because men are constantly making mistakes concerning the moral rightness of acts, and a thousand cases of casuistry occur in which the wisest and best minds will acknowledge their darkness. But if, on the other hand, by conscience we mean that constituent of our nature which expresses itself simply in the feeling of obligation, with the consequent feelings of approval and disapproval, —the sense of duty, the "authoritative impulse,"—then the question as to its fallibility has no meaning. The epithet *fallible* is appropriate only to the judgment, not to a feeling, not to a command.

The theologian who will give the perfect definition of such terms as "sin," "depravity," "regeneration," "holiness," "sanctification," "perfection," will do much toward putting an end to controversy.

Now the truths and experiences of the Christian life are so great as to pass far beyond both the reach of our words and the comprehension of our minds. "Unspeakable," "passeth knowledge," "passeth understanding," "unsearchable," "past finding out,"—are some of the apostolic descriptions of them. Nor let us for a moment imagine it any mark of uncertainty or unreality in a truth, that it cannot be made to lie in well-defined shape before the percipient mind. The number *two* may be known much more distinctly than *two millions*. The latter number we can know only in a feeble, symbolic way. Is it therefore less real and significant than the other? How much distinctness is there in our knowledge of the material universe as a whole? Yet there can be no doubt that the universe exists, and that its greatness is incalculably beyond our farthest-reaching thought. Much more must it be so with the knowledge of spiritual realities,—of the nature of God, the atonement of Christ, the work of the Holy Spirit in the soul.

Nevertheless, we may apprehend that which we cannot comprehend. The same apostle that said, "Now we see in a mirror, darkly," made the rejoicing confession, "Yea verily, and I coun· all things to be loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord." Let us not try to define the indefinable. But it is incumbent on us as theologians, while acknowledging the limits of religious thought and standing in awe before the ever-present Unknown and Infinite, to gain clearer and clearer ideas of Christian truth as God has been pleased to reveal it. Dr. Samuel Harris, in "The Self-Revelation of God," has said: "It is true that religion has suffered from over-definition in theology, in the effort to give an exact answer to every question that can arise in all the

finest and most complicated ramifications of thought. It is true that on many points which come into view, in the study of God and His works, suggestion reveals more than definition. It is true that the heart is often wiser than the head. . . . But in all this there is no justification of loose thinking, of a mysticism of the feelings unpurified and unverified by thought. Man by his rational constitution is impelled to seek, and is under moral obligation to seek, the utmost attainable clearness, precision, completeness, and unity of his knowledge of God." It is certainly true, then, that when we attempt a course of reasoning on such subjects, reason requires that we define as accurately as possible the sense in which we employ our terms. And, moreover, in the case of a theological controversy, when both parties are held strictly to this requirement, it will often transpire that the supposed necessity for the contention has disappeared.

Similar to definition is any clear statement and illustration of a subject. Said a chief justice concerning one of Daniel Webster's early speeches: "That young man's statement of his cause was an unanswerable argument for its justice." Why should it not be so in the case of any advocate who is *on the right side?* Which have you to preach, truth or error? Well, truth is very often self-evidencing. It needs only to be seen in order to be believed. Show it as it is; let it commend itself. Oftener perhaps than we think, what men want is to have some truth of religion clearly and impressively set before them,—exposition, not argument.

II. **Positive Principles.**

And now let us pass from this negative view to the consideration of some positive principles in the argumentative process of preaching.

1. It is *real*, not merely verbal. It employs words to represent things. At first blush this might be supposed to be true of all reasoning, but in fact it is far from being so. One can reason correctly without attaching any distinct meaning to the

terms employed,—even to a single subject or predicate in any of his propositions. If y is equal to x, and z is equal to y, it must follow that z is equal to x, though we should not have the slightest idea of what x, y, and z stand for. They may mean anything in the whole universe of thought; in every case the argument is absolutely perfect.

And may we not use a kind of symbolism different from x, y, and z—may we not use *words*—with logical correctness, and yet with but a dim, uncertain knowledge, or none at all, of their meaning? In reading on some subject you have probably caught yourself passing over words, from time to time, with whose meaning you were unacquainted. To learn it you would have had to consult a dictionary. You did not take the trouble to do this; and one reason was that without it you were able to follow the argument, and this mental movement, together with the rhythm of the sentences and some stir of the imagination, was a sufficient satisfaction. You are reading, e.g., that no one who openly advocated the doctrines of mysticism could escape the *odium ecclesiasticum*, and that the Archbishop of Cambray was an open advocate of these doctrines; and, though you should not understand the meaning of any one of the three terms of the argument, you are fully able to draw the conclusion that the Archbishop of Cambray could not escape the *odium ecclesiasticum*. Nevertheless, your reading, though a logical process, has its beginning and its end in darkness.

And what the reader is thus doing the writer of the argument may himself have done, though probably in a smaller measure. He may have mistaken the meaning of his own terms, or have had but a hazy notion of it, and yet have used them correctly in their relations to each other, and satisfied himself with that. Thus we have words as substitutes for ideas, phrases for facts, instead of words, according to their true purpose, as signs of ideas. Indeed, there seems to be for many minds a subtle charm, due partly, no doubt, to per-

sonal vanity and partly to ignorant wonder, in big words of unexplored meaning. With the lifting of the veil the attraction would cease: the imagination could no longer glorify them at will.

Here, again, the remedy and preventive is definition,—the lifting of the veil. Define your terms, and then, if need be, the terms of your definition, and so on till you reach the thing itself; which will always be something that is known intuitively. Without the exercise of some such care and pains you are in danger, as an inexperienced thinker, of constantly mistaking words for things; and all the more in danger if unwilling to be convinced of your liability to the illusion.

2. It is *constructive*. The destructive is much easier, in every sphere of action, from the mutilation of a book to the exposure of deficiencies and errors in a philosophical system. Any child can brandish and apply a torch; but to handle building tools successfully is an art to be learned. Children may destroy; men only can create. Some one is sadly learning for himself every day the truth of the old observation that a good reputation, built up through the uniform uprightness of years, may be destroyed by the misconduct of an hour. It may be stained by an idle, gossiping tongue. With wonderful ease do a large class of persons pick flaws in the characters of even the most venerable men in the community. It is an unfailing social amusement. Now very close akin to this fault-finding spirit is the disposition to criticise the opinions and beliefs of others. It seems to be as natural and easy to find fault with beliefs as with conduct. The average youth will state offhand objections to the reasoned convictions of the most philosophic minds. So we need not be surprised to find something of this spirit on the rostrum and in the pulpit.

To denounce a sin, to show up the absurdity of an error, to combat an antagonist, kindles a latent fire in the speaker's soul that is quite independent of the object to be accomplished by the argument. It is the joy of battle; and some speakers,

even some preachers, seem to be fully themselves only when under its influence. They speak feebly, save when there is something, or some *person*, to speak against. To be on the war-path,—this of itself awakens a savage delight. Bishop McTyeire has said, in some admirable "Observations" on himself: "Being rather phlegmatic, I need the stimulus of an argument, and the excitement of combating opposition, and the difficulty of resolving doubts and objections,—drawing all by a pleasing and well-sustained warmth toward a desired conclusion. My naturally heavy temperament requires the buoyancy of a strong current to uphold me, else I sink like lead to the bottom." Undoubtedly allowance must be made for a phlegmatic temperament; but the better sources of warmth and animation in preaching the Gospel of the Son of God are not "the excitement of combating opposition," nor even "the difficulty of resolving doubts and objections."

The great characteristic work of the preacher is far more difficult. It demands a larger knowledge, a deeper faith, a freer intellectual energy, a more patient and strenuous love. It is affirmative rather than negative. It is to prove rather than to disprove, to build up rather than to tear down. The overthrow of error is only preliminary; or oftener it follows of itself upon the establishment of truth. The true preacher has got possession of a word of life, and his heart is aglow with intense and steady zeal to communicate it to others. His first thought concerning them is not, What special forms of error do they hold? but, Have they the truth? And his principal use for argument will be to make a way, in the convictions of his hearers, for this positive gospel which has become the light and strength of his own heart. Thus not only will he gain a less prejudiced hearing, the errorist not being put on the defensive, but the false will be dispossessed by the positively true. The soul will not be left empty, swept, and garnished for other intruders, but will be occupied already by its rightful proprietor, the spirit of truth. The inculcation of

truth is the one effective and perfect method of refuting error. It is analogous to the overcoming of evil with good in the moral sphere.

When called on to oppose error directly,—"to banish and drive away all erroneous and strange doctrines contrary to God's Word,"—the preacher will recognize frankly whatever fragments of truth may be found giving vitality to the false doctrine. He will love the truth so well that he can thus recognize it among its counterfeits. He will love the misled soul, and will offer his argument not merely with unyielding conviction, but with friendliness of manner, as not to an enemy, but a brother. Even here his ultimate and ever-present aim will be positive, organific,—not the enfeeblement or subversion of faith, but its establishment upon a sure foundation. The familiar and glorious New Testament example is that of Paul before the Athenians. The large-hearted apostle did not first of all denounce their idolatry. There was something in it to commend, some blind struggle upward toward the divine; and in the most courteous and conciliatory manner does he make mention of this (Acts xvii. 22, 23). It is an example for every Christian missionary, for every Christian pastor, to follow.

There are two kinds of negative argument, or refutation,—the defensive and the aggressive. In the former we refute the objections to our own position; in the latter we disprove the position, or at least the positive arguments, of an opponent. The former is oftener called for in the pulpit than the latter. Not only will there be captious and unreasonable opposition to your message in certain minds, but in others there will be honest and rational objections. To refute these may be the last and decisive step in the establishment of the truth.

Objections may be either theoretical or practical,—that is to say, directed against either a doctrine or a precept.

We may expect to meet with practical objections to Christian truth continually. The excuses of the impenitent sinner,

of the tippler, of the worshiper of money, of the place-seeker, of the idler, will become extremely familiar to you before long. If you can refute them, as occasion may seem to require, fairly and fully, it will be a good work. If you can do this not simply by arid logic, but from a soul penitently aware of its own similar faults and tendencies, and deeply stirred with hatred of sin, with love of virtue, and with enthusiastic good will and fidelity to your fellow-men, it will be the perfect work of truth and love.

Sometimes the objection may be not only refuted, but made to prove the very position which it was designed to disprove. Thus out of his own mouth the objector is condemned. For example, if a Christian decline to engage in the temperance cause, or in any other organized agency to improve the physical, social, and moral condition of his fellows, on the ground that the great business of the Christian is to bring men individually to Christ, it would be easy to show that this of itself is a reason for such agencies, inasmuch as they effectually prepare the way for the Gospel. It is the perfection of prowess and skill in war to capture the guns of the enemy and turn them upon himself.

Note also that there is a *fallacy of objections*. That is to say, it may be assumed that a proposition against which strong objections can be urged must be untrue; and such an assumption cannot be for a moment admitted. There may be unanswerable reasons urged against each of two contradictory propositions, whereas one or the other must necessarily be true. Do not consider yourself under obligation, therefore, to answer every apparently reasonable objection that may be made to the doctrines you have been sent forth to preach. Candidly acknowledge, if need be, that in this or that objection there is some force which you are unable to repel. It will not injure, but will rather advance, the cause of truth to which your life has been devoted.

LECTURE VI

ARGUMENT—POSITIVE PRINCIPLES

RESUMING the subject of argument as to its positive principles, I remark:

3. Like all eloquence, it is *colloquial.* Two persons are required. The hearer must respond to the successive steps of the proof either *for* or *against;* and the speaker, in intellectual and moral sympathy with the hearer, must recognize his answer and endeavor to satisfy his demand.

Otherwise the speaker is arguing, not with a kindred soul, but off into a void, without even "Echo answering half asleep." This occurs whenever, for any cause, the argument is unadapted to the state of the hearer's mind. In such cases, for example, as the following:

(*a*) When the belief combated is not held by any person in the congregation. No one is likely to care for such a discussion. It need not be cared for. It may be a thoroughly logical monologue, and as such may yield a certain pleasure to the speaker; but inasmuch as he has it all to himself and is not speaking with a voice to which other voices can be expected to respond, it is not preaching.

(*b*) When the preacher is offering the usual proofs, he himself having but a second-hand knowledge of them, in support of some cardinal truth about which his hearers have no doubts to be dispelled. He must bring forward new proofs, or set the old ones in new light, or at least feel some fresh and strong personal conviction, if he would waken the answering chords

in the souls before him. There is even danger of a response the exact opposite of that which he desires. He may provoke doubt,—somewhat as a man does by repeated asseverations that he is telling the truth concerning some matter of fact. A simple "yea" or "nay" is more convincing. Perhaps as effectual a method as any for raising a mist of uncertainty in men's minds concerning such essential Christian verities as the redeeming work of Christ, the immortality of man, and the existence of God, would be to give frequent preachments of this kind of argumentation. The story is told of an English bishop, that, after the delivery of a series of discourses on this last great theme, he asked a plain, uneducated member of his congregation as to the effect of the discussion upon his faith, and received the unexpected reply, "Well, my lord, I must say I still believe there is a God."

(*c*) When the preacher answers objections that are not in the minds of the congregation, passing by the actual objections without notice. We have here an instance of the well-known practice of setting up a man of straw and triumphantly laying it low. We can answer any arguments, questions, or strictures that are brought forward, provided we are allowed to bring them forward ourselves. A young theologian wrote a piece in which he put sundry objections to Christianity into the mouth of a pagan, and demonstrated their utter futility one by one, leaving his imaginary antagonist not a leg to stand on. But his wise old preceptor, to whom he showed the discourse for criticism, kindly disclosed its fatal defect with the remark, "You should choose a more clever pagan next time, my son." There is no more appropriate reasoning in the pulpit than that which deals with the sinner's excuses for his sins and impenitence. But an indispensable condition of success is to know the sinner's mind, —to know as well as he does the reasons and apologies with which he would fain justify his refusal to repent and believe the Gospel, and the mental resistance that he will make to the exposure of his fallacies.

Let us, then, bear in mind that, while reasoning is solitary, argument, oratorical reasoning, is a dialogue. Hence, before a silent audience it cannot be carried on without the aid of the imagination. The preacher must know the common mind,—how it feels, what it thinks, what it can understand, and what it will not take the pains to understand. He must know something of the hearer's doubts and difficulties, his beliefs, unbeliefs, and disbeliefs, and must address his argument to them. In a word, he must know how his proofs are likely to be received and make his rejoinders to unspoken replies. This indeed is simply one instance of speaking to the point.

4. It is *select* and *brief*. Only the best of the proofs at command are to be chosen. Have we time for more? Even though we have, a long array of them will be as likely to weaken our cause as to give it strength. "Were it true, there would be no need of saying so much in its behalf; it ought to have more light of its own to shine in,"—will probably be the unspoken criticism of many minds. If we have arguments—or even a single one—that are really strong and convincing, why weary our hearers and produce a reaction of feeling by presenting more than enough? Recently I heard a sermon in which the proposition, that the sinner's hope that the Bible may turn out to be untrue will be disappointed, was proved by two considerations: (1) this hope is without any foundation; (2) many of the greatest and noblest minds have been believers in the Bible. Here the first proof, if well established, was certainly strong enough to stand alone. Or suppose it be the object of the sermon, e.g., to demonstrate the value of the Scriptures. We might show the unique interest attaching to them as *historic records*, as *literary productions*, as a *legislative guide*, as an *intellectual stimulus*, and so on. But on any ordinary occasion such considerations had better be noticed very briefly, if at all. The supreme consideration, the *spiritual value* of the Scriptures, so far outweighs all others that they are as nothing in comparison. This will plainly appear if the

supreme consideration be presented first and the others added: "The holy Scriptures make known to us the way of salvation through Jesus Christ; besides, they are valuable as historic records, they contain much beautiful poetry," etc. Said the Mayor of Beaune—so the story runs—to the Prince of Condé: "To display our joy, we wished to receive you with the report of numerous artillery, but we have not been able for eighteen reasons. In the first place, we have none; secondly—" "My good friend," interrupted the prince, "the first reason is so good, I will excuse the other seventeen."

I do not mean, of course, that we should decline the aid of presumptions and analogies. These are as genuine and useful as any other class of arguments, in their place. They prepare the way for direct and positive proof. E.g., in preaching on the efficacy of intercessory prayer, it might be expedient, before setting forth the proof of this doctrine from *the Christian consciousness*, or experience, and from *the Scriptures*, to point out the presumption that the God of love would permit us to come to Him not only in our own interest, but also in the interest of our fellow-men, and to show the analogy between such intercession and the intercessory requests which human beings are constantly making of one another. But it will seldom be necessary to elaborate such preliminary arguments. To mention them distinctly will sometimes suffice.

5. It is *truthful*. Now it is hard to be truthful in argument. Note the ready and often skilful sophistries with which the sinner, even from early childhood, will defend or extenuate his wrong actions. "Wherein shall we return?" said the apostate Jews to God's prophet (Mal. iii. 7, 8, 13, 14), as if they were unaware of being astray. Many a criminal has convinced his sympathetic listeners, and half convinced himself, that he is innocent of the crime for which he has been adjudged to punishment. I once visited a man condemned to death for a deliberately planned, cold-blooded murder. But to the last he

seemed to soothe his conscience, and attempted to save his reputation, with the plea that the act was done in self-defense: "I know it was wrong; I oughtn't to have done it; but I knew that man would kill me if I did not kill him. I am not a murderer." Sin is the supreme sophist.

But is there any danger peculiar to the pulpit at this point? Let Dr. R. W. Dale, in his "Nine Lectures on Preaching," answer the question: "Of all public speakers, the preacher is most in danger of using arguments that prove nothing. He does not speak under the salutary restraints that compel other men to consider whether there is any relation between their premises and their conclusion. There is no one to reply to him at the time, and the fear of the newspaper belonging to the other party is not before his eyes. This immunity from hostile criticism ought to lead us to be more careful and conscientious in making sure of the soundness of our reasoning; and since we are deprived of the logical discipline which comes from fair and open debate with equal opponents, we should subject ourselves to discipline of another kind."

Of what kind? We are told of an eminent New York preacher who, when asked how he kept up the uniform exactness of argument for which his preaching was noted, replied that he was "accustomed to imagine some legal mind, like that of Daniel Webster, among his hearers, and aimed never to present a train of reasoning to which the great jurist could object." Something of this sort might serve as an expedient, but the real self-discipline is deeper and more searching.

We must submit, as Christian disciples, to the law of Christ. This will forbid commending to others any proof—no matter how weighty it might seem to them—that is destitute of validity and force to our own minds. The preacher may prove no doctrine, e.g., by what he has good reason to believe are interpolated or mistranslated passages of Scripture, nor by the apparent meaning of passages when he is fairly convinced that

this is not their real meaning, even though, as would often be the case, a legal mind, like that of Webster, might not know the difference.

To take a single instance: it would be untruthful, in advocating the duty of temperance, to quote the prohibition, "Drink no wine nor strong drink, thou, nor thy sons with thee," and keep silent about the limitation of the command, which immediately follows,—"when ye go into the tent of meeting" (Lev. x. 9). Draw out of the passage any principle which you believe it to contain, but let the real passage, and not a misleading fragment, be employed.

A make-believe proof is a falsehood; and the argumentative part of the sermon, like every other part, should bear the tokens of moral honesty in the use of the intellect.

6. It is *just*. It not only claims for its proofs their proper force and no more, but accords the same to any objection that may be urged against them. I might undertake to give an estimate of the strength of individual arguments in exemplifying this principle; but let us rather consider the three classes in which all arguments, with respect to their form, may be included, and see what degree of force may be claimed for each class in its relation to the others.

(1) Analogy. Two things, or two classes of things, are known to resemble each other in one or more attributes; one of the two is known to possess a certain additional attribute, or more less closely connected with these; we conclude, therefore, that the other will be found to possess this additional attribute also. This is the argument from analogy.

Shall I give you a formula for it?—

> x is known to possess qualities a, b, c, and d;
> y is known to possess qualities a, b, and c;
> Therefore y may be supposed to possess quality d.

Now if qualities a, b, and c are so related as to necessitate the existence of the additional quality d, the argument is conclusive; but not otherwise. Usually they are not so related;

hence usually the reasoning is of uncertain value. For example: Andrew was like Simon Peter (*a*) in having the same parentage, (*b*) in being taught and trained three years by our Lord, (*c*) in being sent out as an apostle; Simon Peter was also (*d*) largely successful in his preaching; we may conclude, therefore, that Andrew was also (*d*) thus successful. The uncertainty of the conclusion, and the reason therefor, will be readily seen.

What measure of truth do you find in the following argument? "The subject of style in connection with the delivery of God's message is one which it were better to pass over entirely. If we should send a man through the town to announce that a house was on fire, should we lecture him on the style in which he should make the announcement? If we should despatch a life-boat to the rescue of a shipwrecked crew, should we instruct the captain how to throw a figure of speech or two into his invitation? Only let preachers be in earnest, and they will have no difficulty in finding appropriate words."

Another source of uncertainty and error in this class of arguments is that the resemblance or resemblances on which the argument rests may themselves be unreal. For if two things be only apparently alike, evidently there can be no ground of inference from one to the other. A writer on the subject of taxation, e.g., has said that it is a matter of small importance what particular branches of revenue are taxed, "because every tax in the end affects every class of revenue proportionally, as bleeding reduces the circulating blood in every portion of the human frame." But an opponent has replied that there is no analogy between the two things: "The wealth of society is not a fluid, tending continually to a level. It is rather an organism, like a tree or a man, no part of which can be lopped off without permanently disfiguring the whole." Without undertaking to decide upon the relative merits of these two argumentative illustrations, it is unquestionable that one or the other is dependent on a resemblance that does not exist.

The most forceful kind of analogical argument is that which

is known as *a fortiori*. Here the two cases compared are not only alike, but the case to which we reason is stronger than the case from which we reason, with respect to some point vitally connected with the force of the argument. A familiar example is that beautiful interrogative statement of our Lord, "But if God so clothe the grass of the field, which to-day is, and to-morrow is cast into the oven, shall He not much more clothe you, O ye of little faith?" The grass is God's creature, dependent on Him, intended to subserve a useful purpose in the world, and God cares for it. I also am His creature, dependent on Him and intended to subserve a useful purpose in the world; therefore I may expect God to care for me. But, moreover, I am a creature of a higher order than the grass; I am even a child of God; He is the Creator of the grass, but my heavenly Father; therefore *much more* may *I* expect to be an object of the divine care.

The *a fortiori* mode of reasoning is often employed in the pulpit, and indeed in all oratory. It occurs a number of times in the Bible (Job iv. 17–19; Jer. xii. 5; Matt. vii. 11; x. 25; xii. 41, 42; John x. 34–36; Rom. v. 7–10; 1 Cor. ix. 24, 25; Heb. ii. 2, 3; xii. 9; xii. 25; 1 Pet. iv. 17, 18).

The argument from analogy is often employed with excellent effect in answer to objections. An interesting example is Whately's little volume entitled "Historic Doubts concerning Napoleon Bonaparte," in reply to a certain class of biblical critics. Or, to take a more famous example, if a man who believes in a personal Creator and Ruler of the world, but not in the Bible as an authoritative revelation of His mind and will, should produce certain objections to the Bible considered as such a revelation, and you are able to show that objections similar and equally strong may be alleged against the constitution and government of the world, you will not indeed have proved that the Bible is a divine revelation, but you will have proved that those particular objections to it cannot be consistently maintained by a believer in the Creator and Ruler of the

world. And this is the purpose of the Second Part of the most elaborate and profound analogical argument that has ever been written,—Bishop Butler's "Analogy of Religion, Natural and Revealed, to the Constitution and Course of Nature." It is evident, however, that as against an atheist or an agnostic this masterful argument would have no force. Rather he would turn it to his own advantage.

Our Lord refuted the accusations of His opponents, that He had violated a sacred ordinance in healing diseases, and His disciples in plucking ears of grain on the Sabbath day, by the analogy of their own customary conduct (Luke xiii. 11–16; xiv. 1-6), and of David and the priests in the temple (Matt. xii. 1–7). "And they could not answer Him again to these things."

(2) Induction is reasoning to a general truth, or law, from particular instances.

It is clear that the more numerous the instances the nearer the approach to absolute certainty in our conclusion. A common fault is to infer from too few instances. Dr. Norman Macleod may serve as a genial example, in the Journal of his visit to America. Riding on the box of a stage-coach in New England, he observed that the driver sat on his left. Forthwith he jotted down this observation in his note-book, mixing inference and fact in a way not unusual with tourists: "All drivers in America sit on the left side of the box." A little afterward, however, it appeared that this particular driver was *left-handed*. "I learned a lesson from this,—to beware how I generalize." Of every-day occurrence is this top-heavy reasoning.

Especially when the conclusion is one which we wish to find true are we satisfied with such proof as a very small number of cases can furnish. We try to jump instead of patiently walking to our conclusion, with the result frequently of sprawling in the dust.

But the character of the instances has more to do with the

certainty of the conclusion than has their number. If an instance not only suggests or is consistent with a certain conclusion, but contains in itself some evident reason why the conclusion should follow, manifestly its argumentative force is thereby greatly enhanced. If you should ask a hundred persons for a contribution to the missionary cause, and meet with nothing but refusal, it would be a rash conclusion that all men refuse to contribute to Christian missions. Men are so different in character and abilities that the fact of a hundred men's acting in a particular way in such a matter would furnish an exceedingly slight presumption that all men do so. On the other hand, were you to find that in one case pouring water on quicklime was followed by the evolution of heat,—having previously known nothing of the behavior of these two substances when brought together,—you would feel pretty sure that the same thing would occur in every similar case; you would say at once that it is a law of nature. Because material substances, being destitute of will-power (which means destitute of freedom), are uniform in their actions: as one does all do in the same circumstances.

If I know a few instances, or even one, in which a revival meeting has been conducted on what may without presumption be called New Testament methods,—scriptural instruction, scriptural motives, no encouragement of hysterical emotions, no undue emphasis upon non-essential acts, but a proper guarding against and discouragement of such errors,—if I know one instance in which this kind of revival meeting has resulted more favorably, as to the fidelity of its converts and its general effect upon the church and the community, than a revival meeting in which the number of converts rather than the genuineness of their conversion seemed to be the controlling motive,—this single instance will go far toward establishing the conclusion that it will always be so. Because there are evident reasons, apart from the multiplication of instances, why it should be so.

(3) Deduction, the opposite process to induction, is reason-

ing from a general truth to a particular instance. And, unlike analogy and induction, if its premises be true and the reasoning valid, deduction yields an absolutely certain conclusion. E.g., if it is true, first, that all sin is followed by punishment, and, secondly, that using an argument known by us to be fallacious as if we believed it to be sound and good is a sin, then, thirdly, the conclusion that such use of argument is followed by punishment is as true and indisputable as the three fundamental laws of thought.

Deduction is of two kinds, demonstrative and moral, or probable. In demonstrative reasoning (which is confined almost exclusively to mathematics) the premises are necessary truths; in probable reasoning they are not. How, then, do we get these premises? If they are not necessary truths, principles intuitively known to be true and impossible to be denied, by what mental process do we find them? The answer is, by observation and by induction,—chiefly the latter. Now the deductive process is usually simple and easy enough, and, as we have just seen, if it be correctly performed and the premises be true the conclusion is true of necessity. Hence appears the primary importance, in probable deductive reasoning, of induction; we must depend upon this for our premises. Here is the unguarded postern through which fallacy most often slips into our deductive arguments,—not in the deduction, but in the preliminary induction. Given the premises of the Roman Catholic, the English Ritualist, or the high-church Baptist, to draw his conclusion concerning the church and its ordinances is an easy matter. The difficult part of the work is to prove the premises.

So we see how a man may be a good logician and an extremely poor reasoner. For logic, strictly speaking, is conversant about deductive reasoning only. Hence when formal logic takes up the work the greater part of it has already been done. Observation, generalization, definition, induction,—these are the processes necessary to prove the premises of deduction; and

the premises being given, any child in reasoning may usually be trusted to draw the conclusion.

One word more. If honesty and truthfulness should enfeeble the intellect and thus hinder the intellectual influence and success of our lives, we should still be under obligation to be honest, just, truthful. But there is no such fundamental discord in our nature. The relation of truthfulness to intellectual power is that of constitutional harmony and helpfulness. The man who will not deceive others is clearing his own intellectual eyesight. He saves himself from many a delusion. His habit of honest and accurate speech not only directly deepens his moral insight, but indirectly strengthens attention, memory, and reasoning power. The liar damages his intellect as well as corrupts his heart; the truth-teller becomes more and more the truth-seer,—a disciple and witness of the Lord of truth. "The Word [*logos*] was made flesh." "Pilate therefore said unto Him, Art thou a king then? Jesus answered, Thou sayest that I am a king. To this end have I been born, and to this end am I come into the world, that I should bear witness unto the truth. Every one that is of the truth heareth My voice."

LECTURE VII

ARGUMENT—CHRISTIAN TESTIMONY

HERE is a species of argument of such significance in the pulpit as to deserve a separate and special treatment. Accordingly I will devote the present lecture to Christian Testimony.

I. **Its Nature and Claim.**

We have learned that the Bible is a testimony; that it is a long line of testimonies to an outward divine history and an inner spiritual life; that it culminates in the words of Him who is the Amen, the faithful and true Witness, and of those whom He sent forth in the power of the Spirit as His witnesses to the world. Its design is to bring us all into the possession of that same spiritual life, and in this way to furnish us with a testimony which we in our turn may deliver to others. Thus the word of truth is to be transmitted from generation to generation,—by this succession of prophetic and apostolic witnesses.

And wherever is found a congregation of such witnesses, there is the church of God. "We are the circumcision, who worship by the Spirit of God, and glory in Christ Jesus, and have no confidence in the flesh" (Phil. iii. 3). These, wherever they appear, are the true Israel, the covenant people, the Christian congregation, the church; and from them is given forth continually the testimony of Jesus.

From them all: every disciple of Christ is a witness. So

the meeting for prayer and *testimony* declares. So the rehearsal of a creed by an assembled congregation implies; for its language, though of the intellect rather than of the heart, is entirely personal,—"*I believe.*" So the hymns of the church testify. Many are the hymnists,—ministers, laymen, women; and it is out of their own experience that they have told the things of God in Christian song. So the New Testament teaches. Not upon the Apostles only, but upon the assembled church, men and women, awaiting in Jerusalem the fulfilment of their Lord's command, descended the tongues of fire.

And now, when God lays His hand upon one of these Christian witnesses and ordains him to preach the Gospel as the work of his life, are we to expect that henceforth his personal testimony will be hushed? Shall his word hereafter be restricted to what he has heard with the ear or what his books have told him? On the contrary, we may expect him to say from the pulpit what he has already said elsewhere, and more abundantly. A vitally important part of the substance of preaching is testimony. Well might George Herbert, under the title of "The Parson's Library," have not a word to say concerning books, but insist only upon a holy life. The book of personal experience in Christian truth and conduct should enter into "the parson's" sermons more than the works of any theologian. This undoubtedly is apostolic doctrine. "The mystery which hath been hid from all ages and generations: . . . which is *Christ in you*, the hope of glory: *whom we proclaim*" (Col. i. 26–28). "When it was the good pleasure of God . . . to reveal His Son *in me*, that I might *preach* Him among the Gentiles" (Gal. i. 15, 16). More than any other of the Apostles, Paul was an argumentative preacher, elaborating and proving the doctrines of the Gospel; but greater is the revelation of saving truth in his direct testimony and showing forth of the indwelling Christ than in his arguments. Poor and feeble must any word of preaching be that is not a proclamation of the *Christ within.*

Hence among the strong motives that influence men to take part in the ministry of the Gospel as the business of their lives, we are not surprised to find the two following:

1. A desire to teach the Word of God; to tell the story of Jesus as it is written in the New Testament; to preach Christ as there revealed. The intending preacher's mind dwells much on texts and their treatment; he has the instincts of a teacher, perhaps of an orator, and his supreme purpose is to unfold the Scriptures and preach the Saviour to whom they bear witness.

2. The impulse and desire to offer personal testimony for Christ. Dr. Archibald Alexander, in his early ministry in southern Virginia, met with a Baptist preacher who was also a millwright, "in coarse garb, with leathern apron, and laden with tools," earning a living at his trade. The clever young Presbyterian minister, supposing him to be very ignorant and utterly out of place in the pulpit, took occasion to ask his views concerning a call to the ministry. So he of the leathern apron told his story. James Shelburne was his name. He had received little religious instruction; had been deeply convinced of sin; had spent months in darkness and distress; and when at last the light of forgiveness dawned upon him, he could not refrain from praising God and telling his neighbors and friends of his unspeakable blessedness. They would come together on Sunday evenings to hear him. Some were awakened and converted. He read the Bible, and many passages became luminous in the light of his own spiritual experience. These he would attempt to explain to the people; and thus, without any thought of becoming a preacher, he found himself speaking the Word, as he had received it, to whoever would hear. "When the old millwright had finished his narrative," says Dr. Alexander, "I felt much more inclined to doubt my own call to the ministry than that of James Shelburne."

Such instances were not uncommon in early Methodism. The word of the Lord came to an illiterate man not simply in the form of Scripture passages, but in the consciousness of the

Divine Presence in his heart, in conviction and happy conversion, in the witness of the Spirit and the love of Jesus. Therefore, while fully aware that there were many things he could not teach, he knew that he had *one* thing to tell,—something that most men, learned or unschooled, did not know, and yet the one thing needful to be known by all. He had come into possession of the secret of the Lord: that God is the living God, dwelling with men, bringing them to judgment for their sins, and establishing the kingdom of heaven in believing hearts through our Lord Jesus Christ. No wonder such men spoke with assurance, though destitute of all scholarly attainments. It was off their own hearts that they read the law of the Lord to men. "And so there rose up," says Dr. R. W. Dale, "a great army of preachers,—many of them rough and unlearned men,—men who knew very little else, but who knew enough to be *witnesses*—they knew their facts; and they were hot and eager to bear testimony to the power and grace of the living Christ. And it was not the preachers only that bore testimony. . . . It was an age in which the fortunes of the Christian faith seemed desperate. Cool, speculative, learned men believed that they had wholly discredited the testimony of the four evangelists to the power and glory of Christ; but instead of the four, here were hundreds of fresh witnesses to deal with,—original witnesses; and the hundreds grew to thousands, and the thousands to tens of thousands; and Faith, which seemed beaten to the ground, rose exulting and won most splendid victories."

But neither of these two motives is sufficient for the preacher's whole ministry.

The man in whom the first motive is dominant will find that, with the exposition of Scripture and the proclamation of Christian doctrine must be interblended the expression of his own spiritual experience. There must be the personal element,—"I sought the Lord, and He heard me, and delivered me from all my fears"; "Whom, not having seen, we love"; "And

He hath said unto me, My grace is sufficient for thee." His own testimony must reproduce and confirm that of prophet and apostle. Otherwise an indispensable means of conviction will be lacking. Besides, the continuous and progressive experience in the spiritual life which only renders such testimony possible will prevent the preacher's defection from the simplicity that is in Christ. It will fortify his spirit against the allurements of ritualism, unbelief, and formalism.

But the man whose call to preach comes to him mainly as a call to tell of God's gracious dealings with him personally will soon find, likewise, that in order to make full proof of his ministry he must do much more than was first bidden him. He will have to be a student of the Scriptures. He will have to study them for his own religious instruction. Without this instruction his growth in grace will be arrested or distorted; he will not reach a full and symmetrical development of Christian character. But he needs also to know the Scriptures that he may minister them to others. The Christian scribe must not only teach, but prophesy; and the Christian prophet must be also a teacher, a scribe.

These two things, then, go together in the ministry of the Gospel,—exposition and testimony: exposition the most impersonal, and testimony the most personal of all one's utterances. Accord to both their rightful claim, and they will sustain and serve each other, the doctrine shedding light on the experience, and the experience interpreting the doctrine. From the days of the Apostles until now, the substance of all truly great preaching has been the same,—*Bible truth in Christian experience.*

True, the Christian's testimony, whether delivered in or out of the pulpit, is chiefly unconscious and involuntary. It is heard in the whole tone and tenor of his life. Let him, then, stand before a congregation; and though the sermon be purely expository or argumentative, certain indefinable and inimitable signs will show that he is not speaking theoretically, but is

endeavoring to explain or prove that Word of God by which, and not by bread alone, he himself is living. Of Phillips Brooks it has been said, in an able and appreciative estimate of his preaching power: "In society he was commonly the most reticent of men. But when once he rose before the sea of upturned faces that looked to him for counsel and help, or even in his study when he was anticipating their demand upon him, the seal broke, the barrier burst, and the man laid himself bare to the inmost core. . . . Uneventful as his own life was in its outer circumstances, the suffering and the perplexed felt in his presence that he also had endured, and that he had found for himself the comfort and the guidance he brought them. It is true there was no intrusion of his personality, little or no reference to personal experience, no wearing his heart upon his sleeve. . . . He knew and respected the limits of personal reserve, both for himself and for others."

Still, to hold that this unconscious testimony is all would be to impose an undue restriction upon "the liberty of prophesying." We may bear direct testimony in demonstration of the truth, and it may be done without one touch of morbid introspection, egotism, or cant. If, indeed, we sometimes prefer to speak of ourselves in the third person, that, too, may be well. Paul did it with reference to one at least of his experiences —"I knew a man in Christ, fourteen years ago." Why need we depart, in this matter, from the example of the first witnesses of Jesus?

Now is this an exceptional use of testimony? Is it only in personal religion that truth is communicated by telling one's own experience? On the contrary, the same thing is done in connection with almost every subject of instruction. Read the agricultural papers. There is some science in them, and a good deal of theory and conjecture, but certainly no lack of personal testimony as to the cultivation of the soil. What is expected of the preachers who from year to year are asked to fill the Lyman Beecher lectureship on preaching? "It is each

man's own life in the ministry of which he is to tell." Why would you rather have a foreign land and its inhabitants described to you by a traveler than by a scholar? What should you think of a parent who was strictly impersonal in his counsels to his children? How about our men of science? Would it be possible to exalt experience to a higher place than they assign it, both in learning and in teaching the order of nature? A pulpit without personal testimony, so far from being reasonable and regular, is an anomaly in the teaching world.

Nor need there be any lack of variety in this material of preaching. As in exposition, so here, the same few essential truths will reappear continually, but in forms and aspects innumerable. Prayer is not to you precisely what it is to your brother; be content to tell what it is to *you*. So with trust in Providence, the beginnings of the new life in the soul, the witness of the Spirit, the love of the Saviour, the will of God. Think how differently Frederick Robertson and Peter Cartwright would have spoken in a meeting for religious testimony; and yet the same Christ dwelt in the hearts of them both.

Besides, your own inner life cannot abide in any fixed quantity or form. Like all other life, it is affected by its surroundings and is realized in activity and progress. Accordingly the expression of it, direct or indirect, will not be a wearisome monotony. There will be "a new song unto the Lord," and there will be a new word of testimony before the congregation. Says Dr. William M. Taylor, in his sermon on Jeremiah xlviii. 11: "Twenty years ago I should never have been drawn to this text, and could have given no very appreciative explanation of its meaning; but the providence of God, in the interval, has written many times over a commentary on it over my own heart, and if to-day I have been enabled to read that off correctly for your comfort and edification, to Him be all the praise."

II. **Its Validity.**

Nothing is so real to us as our present state of consciousness —not even the existence of material objects. That we do at

this moment have such and such experiences is simply and absolutely true. To doubt it is impossible. If I remember having once lived in the country, or positively dislike a certain occupation, or enjoy the society of a friend, or do an act for my own benefit and satisfaction,—if I am distinctly conscious of such experiences of the *natural life*,—nothing can convince me of the contrary. Again, if I feel a sense of duty, the moral imperative, not enticing or convincing or persuading, but commanding me, and I distinctly recognize this source of action as different in its nature from all others,—I know that this is so. Whether I honor this sense of duty by obedience, or turn away and refuse to comply with its demand, I know that it makes the demand,—that it requests nothing, but, in the face of all the clamorous pleas of the appetites and desires, claims the right to rule my actions. Nor do I hesitate to say so, and thus to testify to the reality of the *moral life*. When Immanuel Kant, in a classic passage, says that he contemplates "the moral law within" with "an ever-rising admiration and reverence," that he "connects it with his consciousness of existence," that he "recognizes it as universal and necessary," that it "proposes his moral worth for the absolute end of his activity, conceding no compromising of its imperative to a necessitation of nature, and spurning in its infinity the conditions and boundaries of this present transitory life," the profound philosopher is simply witnessing in his own way, as any humbler man may do in his, to this sublime moral reality. And now, if I am conscious of needs which the world about me does not satisfy; if I suffer pain of conscience for having neglected duties and broken the moral law; if I yield to the impulse of prayer; if, under the preaching of the Gospel, I experience a keener and deeper sense of sin, and at the same time the hope of salvation; if I give up myself wholly to God in Christ and find peace through the blood of the Cross; if I feel confidence toward God, a sense of nearness to Him and of filial love and fear,—I know that such has been my conscious

experience; and this is my testimony to the reality of the *spiritual life*.

Do I stand alone in this experience? Is it, unlike the sense of the natural world and of the moral law, exceptional? Strange if it were so. If God is Spirit, if He is light and love, strange if He should almost never speak a recognizable word to beings made in His image. He does speak to them. The experience is not peculiar, but common. "Against Thee, Thee only, have I sinned, and done that which is evil in Thy sight": so said a psalmist concerning himself. "Because ye are sons, God sent forth the Spirit of His Son into our hearts, crying, Abba, Father": so said an apostle to the church. Even those to whom the Gospel has never been preached are not without some consciousness of their spiritual birthright, which they either dishonor by unfaithfulness or strive to realize by feeling after God, in whom we have our being.

Not merely was it so once. Sometimes we hear these things spoken of in the pulpit as if they were simply biblical and historic. But such preaching has not the ring of reality; the preacher's voice is but a thin, uncertain reverberation from the sacred ages of the past. And very imperfectly does it represent them. What qualifications have we for interpreting the life of God in the men of the Bible, when we have no consciousness of it in ourselves? Where is our key of knowledge? Have we not already learned as expositors that the Bible is in a dead language, spiritually as well as linguistically, till the divine speech has been heard in our own souls? It was said of Patrick, the half-mythical evangelist of Ireland, that he heard a voice speaking within and saying, "He who gave His life for thee, He speaks in thee." That is merely a legend; but it is a fact that only through the Spirit speaking within can the voice of Jesus in the Scriptures be truly known.

But may we not mistake the testimony of experience? Undoubtedly: mistakes are made in relation to every other subject; why should this subject prove an exception? We may

misinterpret consciousness; we may draw unjustifiable inferences, and may confound inference and fact. One might say, for example, "I am conscious that my friend is the most lovable person in the world," when he was conscious only that his friend was thus attractive *to him;* or, "My conscience forbids me to give money to this tramp," whereas what his conscience really forbade was to *do wrong*, and that such almsgiving would be wrong was a conclusion of his judgment; or a person may not be conscious, at some given time, of anything contrary to Christian love in his heart, but if thereupon he should say, "I am conscious that there is nothing contrary to Christian love in my heart," he would be putting an unjustifiable inference in the place of an experience,—as if a soldier who simply saw no enemy in the camp should declare that there was none. "For I know nothing against myself; yet am I not hereby justified: but He that judgeth me is the Lord" (1 Cor. iv. 4).

Similarly, if a man should claim the testimony of consciousness for his theology, he would be confounding two perfectly distinct though closely related things,—his religion, which is an experience, a life, and his theology, which is an elaborated system of thought, a body of inferences. For example, one cannot plead the testimony of consciousness for the possibility of a Christian's finally falling away from Christ; he can be conscious only of the present possibility of sin. In like manner, when Whitefield professed to have "the witness of the Spirit" to the truth of the Calvinistic doctrine of election, he showed himself to be an incompetent theologian,—failing to discriminate between the reality of the sense of sonship to God which he experienced in connection with his belief in the Gospel as interpreted by Calvin, and the soundness of the whole Calvinistic interpretation of the Gospel. Or, again, if a person who was converted under great emotional excitement—intolerable distress followed suddenly by joyful assurance—offers his experience as a model to which all others, if genuine, will conform, he is not in error as to any matter of fact, but he has

failed to discriminate between the essential and the non-essential, and accordingly has drawn an erroneous conclusion.

But the validity of personal experience as a part of the argumentative substance of preaching is entirely unaffected by any unwarranted theological conclusions that may be drawn from it. All through the Christian ages stands the multitudinous line of Christ's witnesses. Make every possible deduction on the account of infirmities, hypocrisies, unregulated enthusiasm, intellectual errors and vagaries, and there still remains the unimpeachable testimony of this great cloud of witnesses to the reality of sin and fear, of irrepressible longing for a better life, of joy and peace in believing in Jesus, of a sense of sonship, the trustful cry of "Father" to Him in whose hand our life is. The more fully the Gospel is known, believed, and practised, the more powerful and controlling are these experiences. And when made known to others they waken a responsive experience: they stir the dormant religious consciousness of the ungodly, and gladden the Christian with a fresh interpretation not only of the written Word, but also of the divine life in his own heart.

III. **Its Authority.**

Now the preacher should speak, not hesitatingly, not deprecatively, not as the scribes repeating an immemorial tradition ("An aged man with white flowing beard and tremulous voice would say, 'When I was a boy my grandfather, who was a rabbi, often told me how R. Nathan Tolmai used to say,'" and so on). Not thus, and surely not with arrogance and self-conceit; but authoritatively. He must show the unaffected simplicity and confidence, the eloquent (*e-loquens*, outspoken) manner of assured knowledge.

There is, indeed, notwithstanding the universal recognition of human fallibility, a certain authority that belongs to every office and calling. We take the word of a physician in matters pertaining to his profession, and obey his commands blindly, putting life itself in his hands. After the same manner is the

farmer an authority, and the shopkeeper and the shoemaker —every man in his own little professional sphere. So with the Christian ministry. People will cheerfully acknowledge your authority as a religious teacher, especially when it is not intruded upon them. In fact you will sometimes be pained at their too easily contenting themselves with an official decision of questions instead of thinking more for themselves. But the true authority of the minister of Christ is personal, not professional. It rests, not upon what he is presumed to know as a member of a particular class or order, but upon his own character, ability, and experience. That is a feeble minister the weight of whose words is from his office rather than from himself.

Moreover, our truest and weightiest personal authority is not that of a theologian or an exegete. It is that of a Christian; of a man who has been with Jesus, who lives daily in the conscious presence of the heavenly Father and under the teaching of the Holy Spirit. It is the authority of the witness before the court, rather than the authority of the judge on the bench, learned in the law. Well has it been said that the "Confessions" of Augustine are more authoritative than his theological treatises, and Bunyan's "Grace Abounding" than Calvin's "Institutes."

Very precious to a congregation is "the blood-streak of experience" in a sermon. Very persuasive, very commanding, is the preaching of the man who, himself penetrated and possessed by the Christian evangel, tells out of his own heart what he knows of sin, atonement, forgiveness, sonship, eternal life. To such truth other hearts will be constrained to give their Amen.

What competency as Christian teachers did those clergymen have to whom young George Fox went in sore distress to learn what he must do to be saved, and got the advice to take tobacco and sing psalms? On the other hand, an illiterate man who "does justly, loves mercy, and walks humbly with his

God" will speak to an awakened soul with a power which his most erudite brother, if not also of a spiritual mind, must fail to exert. At the age of sixty-five years William Carvosso was barely able to write his name. Yet the letters which he wrote during the last twenty years of his life have been read from that day to the present by the learned and the unlearned, and accepted as the teachings of one who had the highest possible right to show the way of life. "Except a man be born anew, he cannot see the kingdom of God."

Read Part I of Dr. Samuel Harris's "The Self-Revelation of God," Bishop R. S. Foster's "Philosophy of Christian Experience," "Memoir of William Carvosso."

LECTURE VIII

DESCRIPTION

HERE we have a process of the imagination. Its object is to *realize*; not to convince the hearer of the truth, but to impress him with a sense of its reality.

The imagination is often disparaged in common speech, as if it were an instrument of delusion. "You only imagine that —it is better to follow one's judgment—we can imagine anything." But the imagination is not to be confounded with a freakish and irresponsible fancy. It is not a disturber or misleader, but one of the mightiest instruments of discovery, one of the noblest servants of truth. It images the unseen. It is the mind's eye, which sees outward things without the aid of the senses,—

> "that inward eye
> Which is the bliss of solitude,"—

before which, indeed, even the spiritual and eternal comes forth in some form of embodiment.

Of constant imaginative activity no mind, sane or insane, awake or asleep, is destitute. True, Mr. Ruskin has said that "hundreds of people can talk for one who can think, but thousands can think for one who can *see*." But he means "for one who can see" distinctly, steadily, penetratively. The imaginative mind imagines, or "sees," strongly; the prosaic mind also imagines, but feebly. So, whether those pictures of the unseen which each of us must form for himself are vague

or clear, meager or complete, depends on the strength, accuracy, and intelligence of the imagination. I speak a word in your hearing,—"the prophet Elijah," "Mount Olivet," "John the Baptist by the river Jordan." The sound touches your imagination, and forthwith you see *something*. Can you not suppose some other man to see more on hearing such a word, and to see it with a truer vision; so that if each of you were to draw a perfect picture of the mental image his sketch would have greater value than yours?

Is the imagination a power of the mind that can be instructed and cultivated? Perhaps there is none more susceptible of improvement. Looking through a microscope strains the eyes at first, but afterward strengthens and improves them. Likewise, in the beginner, an intense effort of the imagination may only weary and confuse; but the beginner, if faithful, will soon become the expert, able to see distinctly what before was blurred or invisible. He will have learned where and how to look for things.

To describe, then, is to show what you see to others. It may be some outward scene or object; it may be something spiritual, a state of mind, a character. Picture it to the congregation with that infinitely expressive material, your mother-tongue. Not, indeed, by *detailed* description. This wearies and checks rather than stimulates the hearer's imagination. Your picture should be a sketch only; in most cases not so much as that, but only a touch of the pencil here and there. Often two or three telling features of the object are enough. You are addressing minds that are ready themselves to imagine. Give them a start—it is better than to do more.

Your subjects of description will be largely biblical. We may take these, then, as representative of all. The persons and events of a far-distant past are to be so spoken of as to appear vivid and lifelike in your preaching.

Let me illustrate. Suppose you have selected as a text John iii. 30: "He must increase, but I must decrease." You think

it well to have a narrative introduction, and it is given somewhat as follows:

"These are the words of John the Baptist. He had been preaching to the multitude and baptizing at the river Jordan, and had gathered about him a number of disciples. These disciples, as we learn from the context, had informed him that Jesus, to whom he had borne witness, was baptizing, and that all men were coming to Him. 'John answered and said, A man can receive nothing, except it be given him from heaven. Ye yourselves,'" etc. (verses 27–30).

Here the bare facts as recorded by the evangelist are narrated, unillumined by any word of interpretative imagination. Now compare with this the introduction of a sermon by A. K. H. Boyd (the "Country Parson") on the same text:

"There are little things which men say and do which give us a thorough insight into their character, and which enable us to construct a complete theory of what their nature is. . . . There is that in this short sentence that shows us how fit he was to be our blessed Saviour's forerunner, that shows us what a noble-hearted, generous, great man the Baptist was. . . . These disciples of John the Baptist did not like that their master, after filling the first place, should sink into the second, and with some perplexity and grief and disappointment they came and made their moan. . . . There are worthy men who wish good to be done, souls to be saved, sad hearts comforted, Christ's kingdom furthered—but all this done by *themselves*. . . . The very best Christian minister cannot like it when his church begins to get empty. . . . But all this, though very natural, is somewhat little; and there is no such littleness in the Baptist's noble heart. . . . 'I have had my little day, and my light is paling before the rising sun of another,' many a man would sadly enough have said, with a mournful resignation to what could not be helped. Not so John the Baptist. . . . The words are strange. Where many a human being would have said, 'My mortification is complete,' he said, 'My joy is fulfilled.'"

There is nothing remarkable in this description, unless it be the sweet simplicity of thought and language. But it gives a

glimpse of the truth behind the facts. It shows us something of the mind and feeling of John as he stood among his perturbed disciples and spoke to them of the Lord. It sets before us the *man*, not a mere name.

In like manner, the significance of the outward scene of a saying or an event may be discovered by the imagination. Take as an example a few lines from McNeill's sermon entitled "What Aileth Thee, Hagar?":

"'What aileth thee, Hagar?' said the voice out of heaven, suggesting to us how near, after all, are heaven and earth—holy, happy, helpful heaven, and parched, withered, wilderness earth. Notice the scene. A dusky woman, an Egyptian, dark of skin, and darker of heart at this moment, sitting in loneliness and bitterness. A bow-shot off, a young lad. At first he was all the hope, but now he is all the trouble. Utterly spent with the heaviness of the way, he has been cast under a shrub, that his mother may not see him die. Nothing all round about but sand, and barren scrub, and baking rocks, reflecting and beating down more keenly the fierce heat of the sun. A great, overarching, empty heaven; if anything to be seen, away yonder in the distance a black speck or two, which by and by will turn out to be the swift wings, gleaming eyes, and sharpened beaks of the vultures hastening to their prey. Many a time they have got a meal here. From afar they scent the feast, and are just beginning to darken the sky. And there—oh, wonder of wonders—it is writ, *there* heaven is near, there God is, there salvation is, there the voice of promise and hope and revival."

Sometimes purely imaginary circumstances are freely introduced among the actual, as in Bishop Simpson's sermon on "The Christian Ministry," which I have heard him deliver with overwhelming power:

"I see him yonder. He has been preaching in the city, and they carry him out without the walls. The missiles come thick and fast upon him; he falls bruised and wounded, and his enemies leave him for dead. I go to his side, I lift him

up, I wipe the blood away from his face. I look as he catches his breath heavily, and now he opens his eyes. I say to him: 'Paul, you had better give up preaching. They will kill you. Don't go to the next city; don't take up your next appointment; don't go round your circuit.' Just as soon as he is able to recover breath he speaks. I bend my ear to his lips, and he whispers out these words: 'None of these things move me.' I follow him to another city, and after the sermon they arrest him. The robe is taken off his shoulders; a strong man lays on the lash. . . ."

I have said that in description we are not to present a finished picture, but only a few suggestive features; in other words, a charcoal sketch rather than a painting. In the descriptions just quoted as examples there is elaboration enough, —in some perhaps too much. "The art of wearying is to tell everything." Note also that most frequently description is very brief,—a sentence or a phrase, a gleam, a revealing hint, here and there. It is the power to express so wonderfully, in a few words, in the course of an exposition or an argument, his keen poetic insight into nature and the life of man, that has helped to give Frederick Robertson's discourses their singular charm. Such examples as the following may be found on almost every page:

"When the white lightning has quivered in the sky, has that told us nothing of power, or only something of electricity?" "A field of corn, in its yellow ripeness." "See two men meeting together in the streets—mere acquaintance. They will not be five minutes together before a smile will overspread their countenances, or a merry laugh ring of, at the lowest, amusement." "No man ever went through a night-watch in the bivouac, when the distant hum of men and the random shot fired told of possible death on the morrow, or watched in a sick-room, when time was measured by the sufferer's breathing or the intolerable ticking of the clock, without a firmer grasp on the realities of life and time." "Can you not conceive the end of one with a mind so torn and distracted?—the death in battle, the insane frenzy with which he would rush

into the field, and, finding all go against him, and that lost for which he had bartered heaven, after having died a thousand worse than deaths, find death at last upon the spears of the Israelites?"

If you will substitute for such passages the corresponding matter-of-fact statements, the contrast will be very striking.

But there is a greater danger in description than that of elaborateness. It is the danger of extravagance. The imagination may slip away from nature and wisdom and take up the speech of folly. Description makes much use of epithets and figures of speech. But if the epithets and figures be vague, or glaring, or too high-wrought, or too numerous, the effect is displeasing. No distinct image arises in the hearer's mind. There is no true word-painting; only a confusing display of paint.

Sometimes, indeed, the language becomes utterly meaningless. A sermon was handed me for criticism some days ago, which contained a description of the temple service in Jerusalem in the time of King Solomon. The author is by no means destitute of imagination. But in this case he was not content simply to look with his mind's eye, and then to "speak as a man may, to tell what he saw." He must indulge the ambition to embellish his style. So the observer, whom he stations on one of the "surrounding mountains," is made to "behold" several impossible things, among them "the incense ascending to the salubrious ether." He said, when interrogated, that by ether he meant "something above the air." As to whether it was salubrious or not he acknowledged entire ignorance, and also admitted that, even if an ether of this sort exist, no mortal eye could give assurance that a cloud of incense would ever reach it through forty miles of air. The pleasant rhythm and scholarly associations of the half-understood phrase had tempted him into nonsense.

Some scenes are too painful or too appalling for description. No poet would describe a violent death. A pathetic word or

two suggesting the tragic event might be very impressive; a description would be harrowing. Are there not some scenes in the New Testament from which the veil may be drawn, in the pulpit, only for a moment? Let not the preacher attempt to depict, except very briefly or suggestively and with tenderest reverence, the agony in Gethsemane or the Crucifixion. It would produce no such impression as he intends. It would be more likely to distress sensitive minds, as an unfit handling of the most sacred of themes, than to deepen their sense of the Saviour's atoning love.

Now, as to how we shall prepare for this imaginative exposition of Scripture, two suggestions:

1. Get possession of the facts. The poet and the novelist are as close observers, in their way, as the scientific investigator. The first thing with them is to know men and nature as they are, minutely and familiarly. And especially is it demanded of the historic imagination that it shall be at home among the general facts of the time and place with which it is dealing.

Read Bible histories in connection with the Bible itself. Acquaint yourself with biblical geography; know the appearance and productions of Palestine and the surrounding countries. Become familiar with the manners and customs of the people,—how they dressed, what kinds of houses they lived in, how their food was prepared and eaten, how they got a livelihood, their funeral customs, their modes of salutation, of hospitality, of worship, and so on. Be interested in that mystery of baseness and nobility, of suffering and ecstasy, the human heart. Study the characters and dispositions of the Bible men and women, so as to form an idea of how they would feel and act under given circumstances. Above all, familiarize yourselves with the Gospel narratives; learn the events of the life of Jesus, and their surroundings, of that life which is the Center of the world's history and the Light of men. The recent literature on these topics is most excellent

and abundant. Your opportunities here, as compared with those of your predecessors of the last generation, are as ten to one.

Indeed, without a fair knowledge of biblical antiquities we must blunder upon every page of the historical parts of the Bible. Inevitably we shall Americanize the land of Israel and deform the ancient East with modern and Occidental garb. A great painter represents Abraham, in his battle with Chedorlaomer, as wearing the armor of an Italian soldier. I have heard a young preacher speak of the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah "with their spires pointing heavenward," and of Martha of Bethany as "coming in probably with her sleeves rolled up and flour on her apron." And I have heard a preacher by no means "young" say, "This parable is supposed to have been uttered in the spring, when the sower was going forth to sow," and, again, "In the case of the Jewish sacrifices, the animal was killed without the camp, and its body brought," and so on. Even in a sermon of Bishop Simpson we are told that the son of the widow of Nain "had been dead possibly several days." I have read of worse instances. A Sunday-school boy asked his teacher how it was that David could walk on the top of his house. "Don't grumble at your Bible, boy," was the reply; and a fellow-teacher, overhearing the conversation, came to his brother's relief with the suggestion, "The answer to the difficulty is, 'With men it is impossible, but not with God; for with God all things are possible.'"

Now if this ignorance or indifference concerning the outward situations of the men of the past helped us to fix attention upon themselves, and thus to realize that they were men, and not mere shadows of humanity, it could lay claim to great utility. But it does not; it introduces confusion and unreality into our conceptions. The better our knowledge of the outer life, the better our qualification to know the life within. An incorrect image, indeed, may convey more truth and power than a mere name or vague, unpictured idea. I should rather think of

Martha as coming into the room "with her sleeves rolled up and flour upon her apron" than to think of her as little more than the six English letters, M-a-r-t-h-a. It were better to represent the men and women of the past in modern dress than not to re-present them at all. But surely it would be better still as nearly as possible to picture them *as they were*.

2. Look upon the scene, the event, the person, till you get a clear and self-consistent image. Look intently. It is more irksome than to open one's eyes and let them rest idly upon the scene before one's door, or even to look critically upon the faces and costumes of the passers-by. Nevertheless it can be done; the mind's eye may be trained to greater and greater distinctness of vision.

Learn to put yourself in others' places. Enter even into mental conditions and moods as different as possible from your own. Think other men's thoughts, feel their hopes and fears, live their lives. Make real to yourself the human and natural constituents of the sacred story. Without this the men of the Bible will appear in your preaching as rigid and inexpressive as the pictures of them in a church window,—"the prophets blazoned on the pane." An eloquent Scotch preacher, Robertson of Irvine, of whom it was said that he preached "as one to whom the truth was at that moment revealed," divulged the secret of this whole art of historic imagination when some one asked how he had managed to describe the passage of the Red Sea so graphically: "I called up the scene before me, I saw the procession of the tribes, and I simply told what I saw."

But in all this—need I pause to say it?—there is no plea for the antiquarian spirit which loves the past just because it is the past and has "won a glory from its being far." Preachers, indeed, are sometimes accused of this spirit,—of walking through the tombs instead of the streets. Such complaints however are usually due, not to the frequency with which the preacher refers to the past, but to the imperfect, unimaginative

manner in which he describes it. Certainly no one makes complaint of Dr. Talmage, for example, that he is oblivious of his own times; and yet how few sermons are more largely descriptive than his of Bible scenes and events.

There is a danger, it is true, to be guarded against. It is possible to interest one's self more in the circumstances and surroundings of the truth than in the truth itself. The geography, the history, the antiquities of the text, or the various personal traits of Bible characters, may usurp the preacher's chief interest and attention. So the mind of the hearer is transported to the far-away scene and left there. No great doctrine or duty has been sufficiently expounded and emphasized. The preacher has not interpreted to his congregation, by the light of the past, their own day and generation, their own little neighborhood, their own lives. The discourse may have been entertaining, though probably it was not,—for people generally are interested in the past only as it mirrors their own experience or shows forth the hand of God. It may have been instructive and useful, though probably it did little good. But supposing it to have been both interesting and instructive, was it preaching? Was it manifestly and strongly directed, from beginning to end, toward the setting forth of evangelical truth? Rather, the right order was reversed; the frame exchanged places with the picture. Remember, the preacher's object is not to make Bible scholars, but Bible Christians.

It is for this reason that, even when the text is a Scripture narrative, the proposition and divisions had better consist of moral and spiritual than of merely historical ideas. I once gave my class the story of Mary's anointing of Christ as the subject of a homiletic exercise. The two following plans will fairly represent the work that was done:

1. Proposition.—Mary's Anointing of Christ.
   Divisions.—1. The significance of this act to Judas;
   2. To Mary herself;
   3. To Christ.

2. Proposition.—The Service of Love.
   Divisions.—1. It is a service which every disciple of Christ may render, according to his ability and opportunity;
   2. It is acceptable to Christ;
   3. It may possess a significance to Christ which the doer of it would never have supposed.

The latter plan was preferred in the class-room, on the ground that it gave greater prominence to the spiritual truth and meaning of the incident. It was more interpretative. It was more living. It permitted the full use of the facts, but in their proper place,—as simply a vivid and impressive illustration of the truth to be preached.

Closely akin to description is Narration,—story-telling. And this process also frequently enters into the development of the sermon. The introduction may consist of a history of events in connection with the text. An incident may be used as an illustration. Or the text itself may be a Scripture narrative which will need to be retold, either in the introduction or during the progress of the discussion. But the homiletic principles involved in narration are the same as in description, and need not be repeated here. Were I to emphasize one of these principles above the others, it would be that of *suggestiveness*. Narration is much more apt to err through redundancy than through defect. Let the movement be uninterrupted and purposeful. Be picturesque. Select the significant points of the narrative, touch upon a characteristic circumstance or two, and leave the rest unsaid.

Read Thomson's "The Land and the Book," Stanley's "Sinai and Palestine," Bissell's "Biblical Antiquities."

LECTURE IX

ILLUSTRATION—CLASSES, DISCOVERY

HERE again the imagination is active. Here, also, it is more conspicuously creative than in description. We *make* illustrations—or ought to.

I. **What are Illustrations?**

The use of them is not solely to render our meaning clear and lustrous; but also to win attention, to touch the feelings, to convince the judgment, to quicken the imagination, to impress the memory. I know of no one word that seems to express it all as well as that which I have applied to description: we illustrate in order to *make real.* The effect of a good illustration is not a single, simple impression. It is familarization with the communicated truth, *realization.*

Hence we often illustrate a statement which is already plain and incontrovertible. Dr. William M. Taylor tells of a preacher whom he heard discoursing on the certainty of death in some such style as this: "As sure as to-morrow's sun shall rise, as sure as the tidal wave keeps its appointed time, as sure as"—several other perfectly certain things,—till one of his hearers could not repress the impatient exclamation, "What does he mean? Do not the very boys on the street seal their bargains with 'As sure as death'?" And Dr. Taylor gives this as an example under the rule that he lays down for young preachers, that "you should not attempt to illustrate that which is already perfectly plain." Is it out of place, then, we may ask, to speak

of the countless generations of men who have lived and died? to ask the prophet's question, "Your fathers, where are they"? to remind our hearers of those within their own circle of acquaintance, the young and the old, that have passed into eternity? Yet all these are illustrations of the certainty of death. In fact, the very thing such a truism requires of the preacher is illustration. Not, indeed, for the sake of explanation or proof, but of *impression*. It needs no proof; it cannot be described; but to most men it is strangely unreal, though so very familiar; and great will be the benefit when it is sent home to the heart with something of its solemn reality. If the preacher referred to by Dr. Taylor is open to criticism, it is not for using illustrations on this subject, but for the illustrations used.

It may give us a juster idea of the nature and purpose of these inevitable products of the imagination, to divide them into classes.

First, there are *illustrative figures*. These are chiefly the metaphor and the simile, which are too familiar to demand explanation. In addition to these may be mentioned the allegory, the parable, and the fable, as figurative forms of illustration common in ancient times, though rare with the teachers of to-day. An allegory is a story true to nature, illustrating a *series of events in a higher sphere;* a parable is a story true to nature, illustrating some *spiritual truth;* a fable is a story not true to nature, illustrating some *prudential maxim*. In the Scriptures the term *parable* is employed with a broader meaning than the one here given: it includes what we should call allegory,—e.g., the parables of the Sower, the Tares, the Wicked Husbandmen; and sometimes the Scripture parables are so condensed that we should call them metaphors or similes,—e.g., "Physician, heal thyself" (Luke iv. 23); "Can the blind guide the blind? shall they not both fall into a pit?" (Luke vi. 39); "Now from the fig-tree learn her parable: when her branch is now become tender, and putteth

forth its leaves, ye know that the summer is nigh; even so ye also, when ye see all these things, know ye that he is nigh, even at the doors" (Matt. xxiv. 32, 33).

There are good reasons for the rarity of these three species of illustrative figures in the pulpit: most men are not capable of inventing them; and besides they are more suitable for constituting than merely for illustrating discourse. Why did not the Apostles teach in parables?

We have also a kind of illustrations that may be classed in a general way under the head of *symbols*. These are visible objects actually shown to the hearer in illustration of some truth. "Through Eye-gate as well as through Ear-gate." They include mathematical diagrams, scientific experiments in the lecture-room, pictures in "illustrated" books and newspapers, the object-lessons of the kindergarten, sacred ritual types (e.g., the sacrifices of the ancient dispensation), prophetic symbols (e.g., the girdle in Jer. xiii. 1–10), primitive Christian symbols (such as the anchor, the lily, the ring,—representing hope, purity, eternity), and dramatic action. Of these only the last kind is of special homiletic importance. Dramatic action is an inseparable accompaniment of expressive speech. Every child avails himself of its aid. The vivacious preacher can hardly avoid it, and should not try. As to maps and blackboards, our pulpits are not yet supplied with them; and their introduction would probably be attended with greater loss than advantage. The devotional tone of the sermon would be lowered; and matters of minor importance would become relatively too conspicuous. In the religious teaching of children, however, a place has been gained for such helps which they are likely to hold and enlarge.

Again: we use illustrative *examples*. These are generally given in the form of incidents; and they are either *real* or *imaginary*.

Examples may also be divided into *direct* and *analogical*. A direct example is taken from the class of things concerning

which the statement to be illustrated is made. An analogical example is not taken from the class of things concerning which the statement to be illustrated is made, but from a similar class. For instance, the necessity of diligence in the work of Christ may be illustrated directly by the examples of typical Christians, or analogically by the examples of worldly men bent on success in their pursuits. In the latter case, we have, in fact, an *a fortiori* argument used illustratively.

Now I have said that one purpose of illustration is conviction, the convincing of the judgment. And we find that all classes of illustrations, even metaphors, have some argumentative force; for they are founded on resemblance, which is the basis of all reasoning. But this argumentative force is more distinctly appreciable in the case of examples. An example is one of a class. The speaker makes a general assertion,—declares that a whole class of objects have a certain quality. Then he brings forward some one member of that class, and shows that in this instance the assertion holds good. But in doing this he is not merely throwing light on his assertion; he is offering some proof of it. And if he be able to go on, giving example after example, he may make the proof so strong as to exclude all reasonable doubt,—each example contributing its share toward the hearer's conviction. Suppose you wish to prove that the vision of the holy presence and glory of God tends to humble the soul of the good man with a sense of personal unworthiness. You cite the case of Job (xlii. 5, 6), that of Isaiah (vi. 1–5), that of Simon Peter (Luke v. 1–8). And every such instance makes your proposition not only clearer and more lifelike, but more reasonable and convincing.

The rhetoricians remind us that one use of argument is to show the possibility of performing such an act or of pursuing such a course of conduct as will lead to a desired end. First prove that the end is desirable; then that it is *practicable*. And it is here that the argument from example is peculiarly forcible.

Show the despondent soul, for instance, that the Christian life may be lived, by showing that it has been lived. The community around you and the Bible in your hand will furnish abundant examples of—the difficulty of holy living? Yes; but also of its practicability.

Accordingly we may class illustrative figures and symbols as *rhetorical* and examples as *logical* illustrations.

II. **Where and How shall We Find Illustrations?**

Every preacher feels his need of them. If not from the time he begins to preach, experience will soon show that explanation and argument are not enough. He must use figures and examples, or preach to a large majority of uninterested hearers. Shall he quarrel with this state of things, and wish that men had more taste for the abstract and the ratiocinative? Rather let him adapt himself to men as they are—as God made them. So we have to cast about us and see what concrete and pictorial forms can be given to spiritual realities.

Sometimes, indeed, the sermon as a whole will be illustrative. It will be a setting forth of some Bible character or event,—Balaam, Eli, Barnabas, the death of John the Baptist, the Greeks at the feast (John xii. 20–22), the healing of the lunatic child. These are evidently themselves examples, illustrations. They illumine and make real certain great truths in human character, in divine providence, in redemption. And no pulpit themes are likely to be more interesting to the people. Commonly, however, the search for illustrations is not a search for themes, but for materials to be used in their development. Where, then, shall we find them?

Not in things unknown to the congregation. The reason for this is evident. An illustration is a likeness: something less familiar and real to the mind is likened to something more so. But if that to which the unfamiliar thing is compared is itself unfamiliar or even unknown—how can darkness illumine darkness?

Two favorite sources of illustrative material, with a former

generation of preachers, were ancient history and mythology. It was apparently thought desirable to give a flavor of learning, a classic tone, to the sermon, both in quotations and illustrative matter. Says the Rev. John McNeill concerning the pastor of his boyhood, in the Free Church of Scotland: "It got to be a hackneyed phrase in the ears of us lads,—'You remember in classic story.' We had never heard of it before, so we could not possibly remember it. But it was a fine, pompous, learned way of putting things." At any rate, it was unfit. "As Ithaca was too small to satisfy the noble soul of Ulysses, who pined even in his old age for wider spheres and more romantic enterprises, so does the emancipated soul of man resent the inevitable narrowness" . . . ; "Antæus-like, his strength is got by touching his mother"; "The old story over again: brutal centaurs breaking up the marriage feast of the Lapithæ"; "Like the dogs of Actæon, your evil appetites and passions will turn against your own soul and devour it";—such are some of the more familiar allusions to "classic story"; but how many of even the best-educated people in your congregations will know or care anything about them? Probably you are not entirely familiar with them yourself. There is an abundance of better material to be had.

Equally to be avoided is the pedantry of scientific illustrations. It will do us no harm to know something about protoplasm and spectrum analysis. But do not suppose you are forthwith to refer to these subjects in your pulpit, in order to interest some possible student of science in the congregation. He will probably take but a languid interest in such references (for the best part of him, as of all men, is not scientific, but human); and as for the rest of the congregation, forty-nine fiftieths of them can have but the dimmest notion of what you are talking about. "But I shall first give a brief explanation of the unfamiliar fact of science which I propose to make use of." Be sure, then, that you do it simply and skilfully. And it will indeed be a feat accomplished: to acquaint an un-

scientific hearer with a wonder of modern science so that it may make some truth of religion easier for him to get hold of, —all in a few sentences from the pulpit.

It is true, no fixed line can be drawn between popular and scientific knowledge. The facts of common observation and the facts of science shade off into each other by insensible degrees. A goodly number of phenomena and laws of nature once known to none but the learned few—and a short time before not even to them—are now more or less familiar to people generally: the shape and motions of the earth, for example. In these fields you may gather at pleasure; but to bring illustrations from a field not yet thrown open to the public is to commit the rhetorical blunder of *ignotum per ignotius*. A good criterion will be to consider, "What illustration would I use in explaining this subject privately to this or that person?"

There is *a common stock of illustrations*, somewhat analogous to the swarm of trite religious phrases with which every preacher's mind is beset. To require that these shall be absolutely rejected would be idle. For here again the question may be asked, What *is* the common stock? and just where is the division-wall that separates it from every man's private treasury? Our illustrations are usually more or less new and original,—just how much so we ourselves cannot tell. Still we may be prepared to recognize such as are really worn out; and may somehow quicken them into life, utilize them as suggestive of something better, or refuse altogether their proffered service.

Moreover, that which is extremely trite to one person may be fresh and forcible to another. It is possible that you have heard so often of the apostle John in old age carried to the church and delivering the exhortation, "Little children, love one another"; of the sculptor who said, "There's an angel in the stone"; of the artist who painted Innocence and Guilt, and found that the two were one; of the member of a Connecticut legislature who moved, in a time of solar eclipse,

when it was thought that the world was about at an end, that "the candles be brought in," etc.; of the Hindu mother in the olden time casting her babe into the Ganges,—it is quite possible that both the congregation and yourself are so familiar with these incidents that you could hardly hope to use them with interest and effect. If so, let them alone. But if not,—if they are still alive to you, and will probably be so to many hearers,—let them do service still.

I would make a similar remark with respect to *books of illustration*. Touch them lightly. Use them, if at all, for suggestions, rather than by way of direct appropriation. You know why: the materials they furnish, all neatly classified and labeled for whosoever may be in need, will not be really yours. They will not be *of yourself*, as those are that come naturally, through intellectual and spiritual attraction, or have been wrought out in your own experience. Besides, they will encourage your creative imagination in its natural inertness, and thus do it no small injury. I fear the Enchanted Ground of a good many preachers is the Lazy Hills.

> "In the Lazy Hills are trees of shade
> By the dreamy brooks of sleep,
> And the rollicking river of pleasure laughs
> And gambols down the steep;
> But when the blasts of winter come,
> The brooks and the river are frozen dumb."

And it is only this spirit of drowsy indolence, combined perhaps with an uneasy feeling of self-distrust, that prompts the seeking of such aid. It becomes needless when you will that it shall be so. Deal trustfully with your imagination, and it will reward you with a continuous summer-time of productiveness. "The brooks and the river" will never be "frozen dumb."

The same may be said of the illustrations that occur *as illustrations* in your *general reading*. Do not covet them.

Some you will assimilate and use as occasion may suggest, in your own way, probably with no recollection of their origin. But unless they either belong to the common stock or have been thus assimilated they are not properly yours; and their authorship must be acknowledged,—a simple "It has been said," or other word of general acknowledgment, being preferable ordinarily to the mention of the author's name.

But the vast world of books and periodical literature is open to you as a source of materials for illustration. The news of the day will supply them. Make the experiment: take up the first newspaper that comes to hand and see how many illustrations of spiritual truth its history of the world of to-day furnishes. Biography and church history are full of them. Read the life of any eminent Christian with an eye to making this use of it. You will be surprised at its riches. And with how much more intelligence and sincerity can you relate an incident or refer to a fact when you know the whole life of which it formed a part. But above all other books in matter of illustration, as well as in all other matter of preaching, are the *Scriptures*. You cannot plagiarize from the Bible. Use freely all its wealth, both of substance and of forms, for the salvation and upbuilding of the people. It is their Book,—not the antiquary's, nor the scholar's, nor the reader's, but all men's; and it is your business in every possible way to put them in possession of it. Not only an incomparable book of human life, but the Book of the Divine Life, it can never become obsolete. Here is the heart of man laid bare in its deepest and most thrilling experiences. Here is the record of eternal life which God has given us in His Son. Here is great store of metaphors, comparisons, parables, examples, imaging the truth; and these all are yours, freely to receive and freely to give. "Now these things happened unto them by way of example; and they were written for our admonition" (1 Cor. x. 11). Take, for instance, the parables, and those other great utterances of the Incarnate Word, the miracles of Jesus.

A deep and appreciative acquaintance with these alone would afford a supply of the finest illustrative material. Study them for this purpose.

Then, too, what a book of illustrations is *your own life!* Use that; in all modesty, but plainly and unaffectedly, without mock humility. "If you lose your plan, fall back on your experience," was the advice of an old-time preacher. As a rule, however, the experience is to be used in illustration of the plan, rather than in default thereof. And what better illustrative proof could we offer of the Gospel as the power of God unto salvation?

LECTURE X

ILLUSTRATIONS—DISCOVERY, USE

IN addition to the sources of illustration enumerated in the last lecture, I would now mention the *facts of common observation*. Appearing, as they do, in endless number and in ever-varying forms, to all men, and to each man a little different, according to his circumstances and individual temperament, these facts constitute an open and limitless harvest-field of illustrations. The every-day pursuits of men, their vocations and avocations, are brimful of concrete expressions of the things of the Spirit. The whole world, both of nature and of human nature, is an Interpreter's House, resplendent with symbols of the invisible and eternal. In your own home, at the front door and at the back door, in the shop and the market-place, in garden and field and woods, in the railroad cars and in the street, summer and winter, day and night, are myriads of them, all full of meaning to whosoever has the key of interpretation.

Whittier tells us that in early youth, through the influence of a volume of Burns that fell into his hands, he learned where to look for poetry: "I found that the things out of which poems came were not, as I had always imagined, somewhere away off in a world and life lying outside the edge of our own New Hampshire sky—they were right here about my feet and among the people I knew. The common things of our common life I found were full of poetry." A similar discovery needs to be made by every young preacher. In the common

objects and occurrences around you—within a radius of twenty yards of where you are now sitting—are untold treasures of philosophy, science, religion, happiness, opportunity, and of that endless poetry of the pulpit, illustration.

> "We need but open eye and ear
> To find the Orient's marvels here;
> The still, small voice in autumn's hush,
> Yon maple wood the burning bush."

In the last few months two young preachers have asked me to recommend them books from which to get illustrations; and the one wished a history and the other a mythology. Their motives doubtless were good,—and I should be slow to shut the door in the face of any seeker of knowledge,—but none the less were they making the young scholar's mistake, searching in books for what they could find of better quality, more usable and more adaptable to their purpose, in the world about them. Look round you. In this room are the materials for a hundred fresh and forceful illustrations. All we need is the power to see them.

One inestimable advantage of illustrations from every-day life is that the things from which they are taken are so familiar as to attract but little attention to themselves. For, just as the evil tendency in the use of images in worship is to stop at the image and adore that,—worship through images degenerating into image-worship,—so the chief danger in the use of illustrations is that the hearer may stop at the illustration and not pass by means of it to the truth itself. Thus, instead of getting knowledge *through* figures and examples, he would be getting knowledge *of* them. Obviously this is most likely to occur when the matter of the illustration is strikingly novel or interesting. This was Charles G. Finney's reply to his ministerial associates who reproved him, in his early ministry, for referring so often to the various occupations of the farmers and mechanics to whom he was preaching. "Why don't you illustrate

from ancient history," they asked, "and take a more dignified way of illustrating your ideas?" He replied, "If my illustrations bring forward anything new and striking, the illustration itself will occupy the minds of the people, rather than the truth I wish to illustrate."

Still again, one of the best sources of illustrative material is the *assembled congregation*. No conscientious preacher will enter his pulpit unprepared; but a part of his very preparation will be an openness to present impressions, a readiness to take advantage of whatever thoughts are suggested in the act of preaching. The public speaker will be a public thinker. Why should not the things he sees and hears from the pulpit serve at once as illustrations of the truth he is delivering? You have heard, perhaps, of a gathering cloud or a crash of thunder being so used by Whitefield and others; but there is no need of waiting for such unusual and startling occurrences. Any kind of weather outside and any kind of temperature within, the sunshine or shadow on the church floor, the lamp-flame, a restless or a sleeping child,—the simplest circumstance,—may be suggestive enough. Take an example from Dr. Deems:

"To Abraham and Lazarus and Paul heaven is not now among the unseen things. It is as visible to them as earth is to us. As plainly do they see the tree of life beside the river as I now see the trees which grow beside the windows of this church. They see the general assembly and church of the first-born as plainly as I see this congregation. They behold Jesus in His real personality as plainly as I now see in that chancel the bread and wine which are to be our eucharistic feast to-day. The angels of the Lord, as we are taught in Holy Scripture, encamp round them that fear Him. In this holy house, there in that organ-loft, there among those orphan children in the gallery, they have pitched their white tents to-day. Perhaps they crowd this pulpit. I cannot see them. You cannot see them. But they see one another. Your little girl may be among them, and my little boy. They see one another as plainly as I saw the children on whom fell the waters of baptism at that font to-day."

Did not Jesus make use of such illustrations? "Lift up your eyes, and *look on the fields*, that they are white already unto harvest" (John iv. 35). "And He called to Him a little child, and set him in the midst of them, and said . . ." (Matt. xviii. 2, 3). "Behold the birds of the heavens. . . . Consider the lilies of the field" (the Sermon on the Mount).

Of course you are not to make this kind of object-lessons a specialty, and much less are you to make it an affectation. All must be done with simplicity, and will be if you are thoroughly in earnest.

Much more may facts and circumstances *suggested* by the congregation serve the purpose of immediate illustration. The people into whose faces you are looking, if you know them and are interested in them, will represent their occupations, their home life, their recent experiences, and thus will offer many a fact illustrative of the truth that you are even now preaching to them. Nor need any one's name be called, or any impertinent personality be indulged in.

But there is another question,—*how* to find illustrations. Is this an art that may be learned? How to see with one's own eyes to what outward things the kingdom of heaven may be compared—must we not regard it rather as a gift of genius, uncommon and unacquirable? Indeed, has not the greatest of rhetoricians declared, in his Poetics, that the happy use of metaphor is something "which cannot be acquired, and which, consisting in a quick discernment of resemblances, is a certain mark of genius"? I have only to say that, if this be true, you may safely act on the assumption that you are one of the geniuses. The way to find metaphors, and all other kinds of illustrations, is to keep looking for them, and to welcome any that come unsought. It can be done by us all. There is a universal "genius" for resemblances. What is needed in addition is that higher gift of genius, "the infinite capacity for taking pains." One of the best illustrators, of the preachers I have known, assured me that naturally he had "no

imagination." Dr. William M. Taylor gives a somewhat similar account of himself: "If I may speak from my own experience, there is no faculty which is more susceptible of development by culture than that of discovering analogies. When I commenced my ministry it was a rare thing with me to use an illustration." And he goes on to say that, under the stimulus of two books which he got hold of—one of them by Dr. Guthrie—he "began to look for spiritual analogies in everything"; and the unconscious power rose into activity when called for, and served him freely. But here is a much more remarkable instance: "I can say for your encouragement that, while illustrations are as natural to me as breathing, I use fifty now to one in the earlier years of my ministry. For the first six or eight years, perhaps, they were comparatively few and far apart. But I developed a tendency that was latent in me, and educated myself in that respect; and that, too, by study and practice, by hard thought, and by a great many trials, both with the pen and extemporaneously by myself, when I was walking here and there. Whatever I have gained in that direction is largely the result of education." So says the most perfect master of illustration in the modern pulpit, Henry Ward Beecher.

Get first-hand knowledge. Look upon nature, and especially upon human life, with a sympathetic eye. Look *into* them with love and imagination. Learn to take a hint. Learn to ask, What is this like in the spiritual sphere? When our Lord said, "Whereunto shall I liken the kingdom of God?" was it for His own sake He asked, or for the sake of His hearers? It was to start the inquiry in their minds.

And do not spare the pains necessary to make sure of the facts from which your illustration is derived. This of itself will give it something of freshness and reality, while the lack of this may be fatal. I once heard a retired sea-captain, one of my church-members and most interested hearers, remark that he often detected mistakes in pulpit references to life on

the ocean. It was a timely caution, showing the importance of truthfulness and accuracy in the preacher's maritime allusions—as in all others; and I have gratefully remembered the kindly old weather-bronzed sailor as one of my many homiletic instructors. Another was a venerable minister who told me of a sermon preached by him in his first charge from the text, "Whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap." He had been brought up in town, and was not conversant with rural affairs. "Now," he said, "if you sow sparingly you will reap sparingly, and if you sow bountifully you will reap in like measure. For illustration, if the farmer sow only two or three bushels of wheat to the acre, the crop will be small; but let him sow ten or twelve bushels to the acre, and he may expect an abundant harvest." The preacher was at a loss to understand what the country people found so amusing in his remarks, till it was made plain to him after church. I have heard the Gulf Stream spoken of in a pulpit illustration as a stream of fresh water in the briny ocean; and a stone embedded in the trunk of a tree described as gradually carried upward by the growth of the tree. Some of such blunders may be excusable; many are not; all are undesirable.

In the case of incidents gathered from newspapers and books, have regard to their probable truthfulness. Do not accept as trustworthy every story, however strained and unnatural, that appears in print. Many are myths. Many of the incidents, for example, that would be given in an ordinary book of illustrations bear no marks of authenticity. The dying exclamation of Julian the Apostate, "O Galilean, thou hast conquered"; Martin Luther climbing the Holy Stairs and starting to his feet on hearing the words, "The just shall live by faith"; the fruitless prayer of Queen Elizabeth on her death-bed, "Millions of money for a moment of time,"—are examples. It would seem, indeed, that death-bed scenes and sayings are to be received with special caution. Some are authentic and of distinct illustrative value, but others are either falsely colored or altogether apocryphal.

A few days ago I read in a newspaper the following account of "How a Beautiful Hymn was Written":

"One day Mr. Wesley was sitting by an open window, looking out over the bright and beautiful fields. Presently a little bird, flitting about in the sunshine, attracted his attention. Just then a hawk came sweeping down toward the little bird. The poor thing, very much frightened, was darting here and there, trying to find some place of refuge. In the bright sunny air, in the leafy trees of the green fields, there was no hiding-place from the fierce grasp of the hawk. But seeing an open window and a man sitting by it, the bird flew, in its extremity, toward it, and, with a beating heart and quivering wing, found refuge in Mr. Wesley's bosom. He sheltered it from the threatening danger and saved it from a cruel death.

"Mr. Wesley was at that time suffering from severe trials, and was feeling the need of refuge in his own time of trouble as much as did the trembling little bird that nestled so safely in his bosom. So he took up his pen and wrote that sweet hymn:

> 'Jesus, lover of my soul,
> Let me to Thy bosom fly,
> While the waves of trouble roll,
> While the tempest still is high.'"

A pleasing little story; but unworthy to be used, in the pulpit or elsewhere, because it cannot be verified and probably does not contain one word of truth.

Be as imaginative as possible, but discerning and truthful withal. Use no counterfeits, either in argument or illustration. The thoughtful and truth-loving hearer is pained by them, and his confidence in the teachings of the pulpit weakened.

Another word. One important part of your ever-growing and ever-dissolving Homiletic Note-book will be entitled "Illustrations." Let it always be so. Note down faithfully this kind of sermon stuff as it comes to hand. Do so at least till you no longer feel the need of it—if that time ever comes. And while not denying yourself the ready aid of "scissors and paste," you may be sure that the more *unprinted matter* this and every other part of your book contains, the more fully will it be your own.

III. How shall We Use Illustrations?

Having the material at hand, what can we do with it? The people, rest assured, do not care for its intrinsic value, any more than for the intrinsic value of food not yet prepared and put within reach,—of wheat on the plains of Dakota. Good, as a descriptive term, is relative; it means good *for something*. Those are not good illustrations, no matter how much excellent substance may be in them, that are not so worked up and so handled as to be effective. Well chosen and well put, are the requirements.

1. It is easy to have *too many*. Illustrations are not like probable arguments,—going well together in a series, the more good ones the better. Usually two are better than three, and one better than two. Says Dr. South: "Which three powerful incentives, meeting with these three violent affections, are, as it were, the great trident in the tempter's hand, by which he strikes through the very hearts and souls of men; or as a mighty threefold cord, by which he first hampers and then d aws the whole world after him, and that with such a rapid swing, such an irresistible fascination upon the understandings as well as appetites of men, that, as God said heretofore, 'Let there be light,' and there was light, so this proud rival of his Creator and overturner of creation is still saying in defiance of Him, 'Let there be darkness,' and there is darkness" (sermon on "The Light Within"). Now what is gained by thus calling up an image in the hearer's mind, only to displace it immediately by another, and then that by another on the same subject? Not definiteness of impression, certainly.

To quote an instance from a more recent source, Spurgeon has said concerning metaphorical illustrations: "*They should not be too numerous.* . . . Some men seem never to have enough of metaphors; each one of their sentences must be a flower. They compass sea and land to find a fresh piece of colored glass for their windows. . . . Flowers upon the table at a banquet are well enough; but as nobody can live upon

bouquets, they will become objects of contempt if they are set before us in lieu of substantial viands. The difference between a little salt with your meat and being compelled to empty the salt-cellar is clear to all." Here we have four metaphors in immediate succession to illustrate the principle of moderation in the use of metaphor,—an admirable example of the viola tion of a principle in the very act of enforcing it.

The fact that your numerous illustrations are all pleasant enough to hear—that people will continue to listen—by no means settles the case in their favor. The child on your knee will say, "Tell me another story," as long as you have any more to tell, and longer. The question is, What does he get from them, except a pleasing titillation of his fancy? The grown-up child, likewise, will listen well to stories; nevertheless he may hear too many for his profit.

According to Campbell, in his "Philosophy of Rhetoric," there is no source of nonsense in orators and poets equal to excessive indulgence in metaphor. "Nothing is more certain," he says, "than that this trope, when temperately and appositely used, serves to give weight to the expression and energy to the sentiment. On the contrary, when vaguely and intemperately used, nothing can serve more effectually to cloud the sense when there is sense, and by consequence to conceal defect where there is no sense to show. And this is the case not only where there is in the same sentence a mixture of discordant metaphors, but also where the metaphorical style is too long continued or too far pursued." Dr. Campbell then undertakes to give the "philosophy" of this fact, with which I need not detain you. I will say that what is here affirmed of metaphors is substantially true of illustrations in general (*examples* may probably be regarded as exceptions to the rule); and there never was a time, perhaps, when the need of laying emphasis on this truth of rhetoric was as great as at present. Compare representative sermons of the present day with those of any past period in the history of preaching, and you will

probably be inclined to characterize this as the period of illustrations. But the good work is often poorly done by being painfully overdone. It is well to have something better than the tallow candles of former days, but not to suspend an electric lamp from every square yard of the ceiling.

Especially, do not construct any constituent part of your sermon with reference to an illustration. "We have heard," wrote a committee of supply concerning a young preacher who had been recommended to the pulpit it represented, "that Mr. —— constructs his sermons by first collecting a number of telling illustrations and then building his sermon around them. Is this true? If it is, he is not the man for us." I have not "heard," but have reason to suspect, that something of this sort is true of some parts of a good many present-day sermons. But there is no need of so shameful a sacrifice of symmetry, tone, and strength. Gather up the solid substance of thought and doctrine, and let the discussion move along its proper logical line, no matter what alluring incident or metaphor may practise its enchantments upon you. Illustrate your sermons, but do not indulge in the weakness of sermonizing your illustrations.

2. It is easy to have them *too long*. Why should eight or ten of the few precious minutes of a sermon be occupied with an anecdote of which three fourths is verbiage and irrelevant circumstances? So with figures. Let them be bright and brief, "not too far pursued." A common mistake of the young preacher is to suppose that long quotations and elaborate figures will give solidity and weight to his sermon. They only make it heavy.

3. Whatever may be neglected, *let pertinency be observed*. Resist the temptation to introduce an illustration whether or no. If it do not fairly elucidate that for the sake of which it is ostensibly employed, get another or have none. Even silks and laces out of place are no better than rubbish.

4. There are some points worthy of notice in the *literary form of an illustration.*

The *preface* should usually be—wanting; and, where one is needed, as informal as possible. Dr. Joseph Parker declares that as soon as he hears a preacher say, "My beloved brethren, let us illustrate this by one of the most beautiful and affecting anecdotes which it was ever my privilege to hear," he makes up his mind "to endure a dreary recital of very painful nonsense." That is hardly a caricature; and this I know is not: "I am indebted for the following illustration to a work entitled 'The Tongue of Fire, or, The True Power of Christianity,' by the Rev. William Arthur." Nor is this: "I will here relate an incident that I have read, not only because it is very affecting in itself, but because it will illustrate the subject under consideration." No "painful nonsense" followed either of these prefaces, but each had a decidedly leaden effect on "the following illustration."

Brilliancy of style is not to be coveted here, nor anywhere. Here certainly, even when genuine, it is better adapted to hinder than to advance the true purpose. I have heard a professor of physics say that he preferred to make his lecture-room experiments as simple as possible. He had seen students so delighted with what was called a "brilliant experiment"—colors flashing and sparks flying—and so filled with admiration for the brilliant experimenter as to lose sight of what it was all for. A similar result is apt to occur in the case of a showy verbal illustration.

But clearness, pointedness, condensation, suggestiveness of style,—these are wholly appropriate and diligently to be sought after.

The application may often be very brief, or even entirely omitted,—just as a fable may be more impressive for having no moral appended. The illustration may shine brightly enough in its own light. But in other cases an application will be needed; and it may require more skill than the illustration it-

self. Here, too, let the preacher apply a good test of his moral earnestness. Is he really trying to carry his point,—to effect the conviction and persuasion of his hearers? Then will he not be content to entertain them with a pleasing figure or story. He will be careful both to show what it means and to bring the force of it to bear upon the specific object of the sermon. Moody's illustrations are excellent in this respect, as in most others. They are energetically applied. You may open any of his little volumes almost immediately upon such an example as the following:

"I was in an eye infirmary in Chicago some time ago, before the great fire. A mother brought a beautiful little babe to the doctor—a babe only a few months old—and wanted the doctor to look at the child's eyes. He did so, and pronounced it blind—blind for life—it will never see again. The moment he said that, the mother seized it, pressed it to her bosom, and gave a terrible scream. It pierced my heart, and I could not but weep; the doctor wept; we could not help it. 'Oh, my darling,' she cried, 'are you never to see the mother that gave you birth? Oh, doctor, I cannot stand it. My child! my child!' It was a sight to move any heart. But what is the loss of eye ight to the loss of a soul? I had a thousand times rather have these eyes taken out of my head and go to the grave blind than lose my soul. I have a son, and no one but God knows how I love him; but I would see those eyes dug out of his head to-night rather than see him grow up to manhood and go down to the grave without Christ and without hope. The loss of a soul! Christ knew what it meant. That is what brought Him from the bosom of the Father; that is what brought Him from the throne; that is what brought Him to Calvary. The Son of God was in earnest. When He died on Calvary it was to save a lost world; it was to save your soul and mine."

Here is the critical point,—the opportunity to turn the forces of imagination sharply upon the conscience and the will; and often it is but slightly improved. Is not this one reason for the proverbial facility with which hearers remember the illus-

tration and forget the purpose for which it was employed? The latter, in many cases, does not receive sufficient emphasis.

What wonderful directness and penetrative force in the applications of our Lord's parables! "Which of these three, thinkest thou, proved neighbor unto him that fell among the robbers? And he said, He that showed mercy on him. And Jesus said unto him, Go, and do thou likewise" (Luke x. 36, 37); "So is he that layeth up treasure for himself, and is not rich toward God" (Luke xii. 21); "And I say unto you, Make to yourselves friends by means of the mammon of unrighteousness; that, when it shall fail, they may receive you into the eternal tabernacles" (Luke xvi. 9). In this, as in all things, may we learn of Him on whose lips dwelt the perfect word of wisdom and edification.

Read Spurgeon's "Art of Illustration."

LECTURE XI

PERSUASION

BY the persuasive process in preaching we mean the excitation of motives. For persuasion is addressed to the will, and its materials are motives; that is to say, it is by motives always and only that the will is influenced. Knowledge and conviction are not enough. To know one's duty is not to do it, to see is not to move; and the preacher's aim is to induce men to move, to influence them toward action.

Is persuasion, then, an important part of preaching? This is much the same as asking whether conduct is an important part of life. "One thing only troubles me," says Marcus Aurelius, "lest I should do something which the constitution of man does not allow, or in the way which it does not allow, or what it does not allow now." But why need we seek wisdom of even the noblest of ancient moralists on this subject? We have it within ourselves,—the universal witness of conscience. And what is the supreme purpose of the Bible but right character, right conduct? It is "a lamp unto our *feet*." The Law, the Prophets, the Gospel, have as their one end, in the case of every man, the life of God in the soul; and the outward expression of this inner life is Christian conduct. "Who will render to every man according to his works" (Rom. ii. 6). How far is Christianity from being a system of mere intellectualism or emotionalism! "Thy will be done on earth, as it is in heaven." To hear the words even of the in-

carnate Wisdom of God is not to be wise: "Every one that heareth these words of Mine, and *doeth them*, shall be likened unto a wise man."

No Bible doctrine is too glorious for every-day *use*. Some of the sublimest conceptions of Christian truth from the great Apostle's pen are introduced incidentally by way of persuading to some simple daily duty (2 Cor. viii. 7–9; Eph. v. 25–33; Phil. ii. 3–10; Titus ii. 9–15). In the mind of Paul these supreme truths of revelation found their end only when transmuted into conduct, into *life*.

In like manner a truth and its practical application is the type of all preaching. The whole movement of pulpit discourse is represented by such Scripture passages as the foregoing, or, in more condensed form, by such as these: "Repent ye; for the kingdom of heaven is at hand" (Matt. iii. 2); "And let us not be weary in well-doing: for in due season we shall reap, if we faint not" (Gal. vi. 9); "I was dumb, I opened not my mouth; because Thou didst it" (Ps. xxxix. 9).

Persuasion, then, is the ultimatum of preaching. All else is subsidiary; this is the end. No other conception of it can be formed by the earnest and spiritually minded minister. "For one," says Bishop Pierce, "I cannot preach much at best, but I cannot preach at all unless I have good hope of achieving results. I want to see impressions, effects, fruits, sinners awakened, souls converted, the church happy." And the language of Blaikie, in his history of "The Preachers of Scotland," is none too strong: "It would mark something like a new era of pulpit power if preachers realized the obligation to persuade, and coveted this power as the best of pulpit gifts."

In our study of exposition we saw that in a sense all homiletic processes are expository,—all begin in exposition. We now discover a sense in which they are all persuasive,—all end in persuasion. But we include under the present title that process only which is immediately persuasive; not the preparatory steps for exciting the motives, but the actual

excitation of them. Nothing less than this is, strictly speaking, persuasion.

Now motives sustain a relation to the will analogous to that which proofs and arguments sustain to the intellect. A proof is a *reason for belief;* a motive is a *reason for action.*

The will stands compassed about by sundry systems of necessity; but itself is no part of such a system. It is supernatural and free. It may choose one of two. This is the testimony of the ultimate authority in knowledge, the testimony of consciousness. Hence it is everybody's belief, as every one's unstudied actions and language prove. It is the dishonored belief even of those theologians, like Calvin and Jonathan Edwards, and those philosophers, like the materialists, whose system of thought demands its denial.

But an essential *condition* for the action of the will is the presence of motives. To choose between two objects in the utter absence of motives would be blind, spontaneous action, —not the act of a rational will.

I have reminded you that motives are reasons for action. A child is falling in front of a runaway horse: why do you rush to the rescue? In order to save the imperiled child. This is the end in view; and so it is the reason for the act, and may be fitly called the motive. But what moved you to seek this end? Compassion. Had there been no such feeling in your heart, you would have pursued your way on the sidewalk, uninterrupted and unconcerned. Accordingly we call this feeling, likewise, a motive. Now it is evident that a motive in one of these senses involves the corresponding motive in the other sense. We never choose an end till some feeling acts upon us as an impulse; and, on the other hand, an impulse to choose is always an impulse to choose something, to choose some end.

Regarding motives as reasons for action, we may call them *rational;* regarding them as feelings that prompt action, we may call them *impulsive.* I have used the term in the first

sense in the statement that motives are the materials of persuasion. I shall use it in the second sense in the classification of motives which follows.

All motives are feelings, but only some feelings are motives; and these are those feelings that have in them the element either of *moral obligation* or of *desire*. We shall not notice them all, but only such as may be given in answer to our first main inquiry:

I. **What Motives are Suitable to be Addressed in Christian Preaching?**

There are several ways of finding out. We may first of all turn to the Scriptures, and see to what motives prophets and apostles and, above all, the Master Himself, appealed. We may read the sermons of wise and successful preachers with the same purpose. Nor must we neglect to study man, and to make a continual study of *men*,—watching meanwhile the effect of our own preaching, that we may learn practically what considerations, what feelings, incite men to repentance and holy living.

The result of our investigation will be nothing novel or startling, but in general terms as follows: Christian motives are,—self-love, duty, love to fellow-men, love to God.

1. *Self-love* is such a regard for our own being as will prompt us to seek that which is best for ourselves. This good, when properly understood, is always seen to be consonant with the good of others. The perversion of self-love is selfishness, which may be described as such a depreciation of our own being as will influence us to seek the gratification of our desires without reference to that which is really best either for ourselves or others. Selfishness antagonizes both love to our fellow-men and to ourselves,—is destructive alike of others' good and our own.

To desire life, food, home, property, society, esteem, freedom from pain, is to love one's self. But there are better things,—righteousness, usefulness, Christlikeness of character; and

to desire these is to love both one's self and others. Now to seek the lower ends in disregard of the higher—to be cowardly, voluptuous, ambitious, covetous, vain—is to pamper the lower self and to dishonor the moral and spiritual self; and this is selfishness.

Discriminate clearly between these two dispositions, self-love and its perversion, selfishness. They are often confounded. Says Frederick Robertson, for example: "It is a low virtue, prudence, a form of selfishness; yet prudence *is* a virtue." Surely not a virtue at all, if a form of selfishness. It is a form of the love of one's self.

To desire that we may avoid hell and find a home in heaven, when we depart this life, is self-love. At the best it is self-love; it may be selfishness, and thus defeat its own object. Let a man have as his idea of heaven, not the eternal state of knowledge, righteousness, and love, not the communion of redeemed and holy spirits, not perfect service and sonship to God, not the joy and glory of his Lord, but some fancied scene of immunity from pain, and of enjoyment hardly above the physical,—and it may well be that he will seek it selfishly. He may try to get his own soul eternally saved (as he understands salvation) to the neglect of other souls,—bestowing thought and anxiety, prayer and labor, upon that, when the time has come to lose himself in Christian love for his fellows and whole-hearted devotion to the precious will of God. He may be striving to make his calling and election sure, in forgetfulness of the truth that the Christian's calling and election are to a righteous, loving, Christlike life.

All personal hopes and fears, whether relating to the life which now is or to that which is to come, are of the nature of self-love. They all may, and often do, take the degenerate form of selfishness; and to be selfish is to be sinful.

2. You may be sure, standing before a congregation, that the persons into whose faces you look not only feel the pressure of many and diverse desires upon their will, but experi-

ence continually a very different impulse to action: they know the feeling of moral obligation, the *sense of duty*. In some it is strong; in others feeble; in them all it is present, to a greater or less degree, a controlling power. You will make no mistake in assuming in all your hearers, young and old, godly and ungodly, the existence of this *conscience*. They will understand your words when you exhort them to do this or that—to control their appetites, to be just and kind, to worship and serve their Creator—because it is *right*. They will feel the impulsion of a motive clearly distinct from all others, and utterly refusing to be classed or confounded with them, —not, "It would be agreeable to do this"; not, "It is expected of me"; not, "It is according to the proprieties of life"; not, "Some one compels me to do it"; but, "I *ought* to do it." The same thing would be true, though not to the same extent, if you stood before a congregation of barbarians.

Appeal to this motive. Stir the sluggish consciences of men with moral truth. Urge them to do right in all circumstances and at all hazards. "Not only because of the wrath, but also for conscience' sake." Urge the Christian life upon them, with all its duties and with all its moral sublimity, as the life that men ought to live.

3. In unbroken harmony with the law of duty is the *spirit of love*. And this will be accentuated in our preaching, so far as we follow the New Testament examples, more than the other. Does not our Lord declare that it is all (Matt. xxii. 35–40)? To seek the highest good of men, as their brother, and to live so as to please God, as His child, is to do in the spirit of love all that is demanded by the law of duty. It is the most perfect possible fulfilment of the law.

Now among these motives the preacher, in the process of persuasion, is continually making choice. On what principle shall he choose? when shall he appeal to this motive and when to that?

In the first place he must make his appeal to motives actu-

ally existing in the person whom he would influence. In other words it is incumbent upon him to observe the principle of *adaptation*. The preacher must meet men where they are, —not where he is, nor where he would prefer them to be. He must adapt his instrument, Christian truth, to the material upon which he works, to the disposition and character of the hearer.

Urge the disobedient and unloving child to obey, by the consideration that he will please his father: the effort is vain, because the appeal is made to an imaginary, not a real, motive. And may we reasonably expect a different result in urging the profligate and obdurate sinner to repentance, on the ground that by such an act he would please and glorify God? You might do better by an appeal to his conscience, his sense of the rightness of repentance. But in all probability you will have to begin with the motive of self-love; and with that in its lowest form,—with the *fear of loss and pain*. "Except ye repent, ye shall all in like manner perish" (Luke xiii. 3). "If thy hand or thy foot causeth thee to stumble, cut it off, and cast it from thee: it is good for thee to enter into life maimed or halt, rather than having two hands or two feet to be cast into the eternal fire" (Matt. xviii. 8).

In like manner even regenerate Christian men are not equally susceptible to every class of Christian motives. Some respond to the commands of duty more earnestly than to the sweet persuasions of love; of others the converse is true. Some, again, have much natural kindness of heart, which makes it easier to love their neighbor with moral love, while they show little natural tendency toward spiritual reverence or devotion; and others, like Jacob of old, are more inclined to believe in God than to deal justly and kindly with their fellows. These natural endowments and defects will still appear after conversion, as relative strength and weakness, perfection and imperfection. Then, too, there are different stages of development in Christian character. The better you know people, and

especially the people to whom you preach, the more likely are your appeals to be wisely directed. Let me ask, Why did Jesus, whose very breath of life was love to others and to God, appeal so powerfully to the motive of self-love in His hearers?

But, secondly, the preacher, in the application of the Word of God to motives, must observe the principle of their *comparative excellence*. Appeal to higher motives in preference to lower. Is it not thus that all wise and true teachers do? For example, they dispense with close personal supervision and corporal punishment, and put the youth on his honor, as soon as ever his sense of honor can bear the strain. By trusting him they expect to make him more worthy of confidence. By showing him that he is expected to act truthfully and honestly they influence him toward that course of action, and thus make him what they wish him to be.

Here, as elsewhere, one of the conditions of growth is exercise. Call a motive into action, and the next time it will act more readily and strongly. Let it remain quiescent, while other motives are stirred into activity, and after a time that which it has of strength will be taken away from it.

Is it necessary to begin with men on the plane of self-love, —even of self-love as they understand it, probably not the highest and best? It is equally necessary to raise them above it. There is a type of Christian preaching by no means uncommon that occupies itself disproportionately with the lower motives. Rewards and punishments are relied on almost exclusively, not only to awaken the sinner, but to perfect the virtues of the regenerate heart. Personal accountability, the advantages of godliness, the terrors of retribution, are well-nigh the sole considerations by which the Christian life is recommended. If Paley's once wide-spread definition of virtue —"doing good to mankind, according to the will of God, for the sake of everlasting happiness"—is not explicitly professed, it might be professed consistently enough with the preacher's uniform presentation of the Gospel. But this is to linger and

remain among the rudiments of Christian doctrine and experience. Indeed, it is almost inevitably to deteriorate self-love with the base alloy of selfishness. Here is the spiritual defect —is it not?—of one of the few greatest books on the Christian life, the Pilgrim's Progress.

A nobler motive than this mixture of self-love and selfishness is duty. There is no taint or suspicion of selfishness—not even of "celestial selfishness"—in an active and accurate conscience. The man who turns away from sin and gives up himself to God and His service because of the conviction that this is the right life for a man to live, is fearing God and working righteousness; and in whatever nation his lot has been cast, is accepted of Him. May the number of such high-souled servants of God be increased a thousandfold!

There is a loneliness in duty. It is not communion; its symbol is the prompt and steady footstep in some appointed path,—not the grasping hand, nor the eye kindling with the warm light of joyful enthusiasm. But who could not wish that we had more of its controlling power in the church of God? Too prevalent are easy and flexible views of our baptismal covenant, and indifference to the many claims of moral obligation. Too rare is that strength and heroism of character which comes through voluntary subjection to the divine Lawgiver,—the unflinching obedience, the unconquerable will. "But Peter and John answered and said unto them, Whether it be right in the sight of God to hearken unto you rather than unto God, judge ye" (Acts iv. 19).

But again, there is a type of preaching in which the cold and monotonous iteration of "duty, *duty*," from Sunday to Sunday, with only a subordinate presentation of the distinctive and supreme truths of the Gospel, or scarcely more than incidental reference to them, leaves unsatisfied the hunger and thirst of the soul for God. Yes, for God Himself, for the communion of the Spirit, for the Eternal, the Father in heaven, not commanding us from without, but abiding within. The

moral law is constantly proclaimed, and that is well; but not "the law of the spirit of life in Christ Jesus"—and that is ill. Is it *Christian* preaching? The cry of the Psalmist was, "My soul is athirst for God, for the living God." The voice of the Christ is, "I delight to do Thy will, O my God; yea, *Thy law is within my heart.*" Shall we not preach the Father's redeeming love, the Christ who came that we might have life very abundantly, the Spirit who helps our infirmities? Shall we not say continually to the struggling soul, in the name of the Father and the Saviour and the Spirit, "Thou *mayst* and thou *canst*," as well as, "Thou must." In brief, should not our preaching be the preaching of the Cross? The reign of Christ in the heart will produce that perfect state of experience and character in which all duty is done in the spirit of love, and the law of God becomes our joy and song. And the hope of future reward will be glorified into the hope of being filled with the mind of Christ and wholly conformed to His image. "When Christ, who is our life, shall be manifested, then shall ye also with Him be manifested in glory."

"What must I do to be saved?" is a good question; but it is not a good question to be asking forever. Out of the saved man's heart arises another: "Lord, what *wilt Thou have me* to do?"—and another: "Lord, what *may* I do for Thee?" It is well, doubtless, to "trample underfoot that enthusiastic doctrine that 'we are not to do good unless our hearts are free to it'"; but always to feel free to it in the spirit of sonship to God is a higher attainment. Duty may be a conscious burden; but love is so divine a life in our nature as makes the weight of duty easy to bear. It works a holy unconsciousness of yokes and burdens.

Observe how the Old Testament motives, as to their general character, are superseded by those of the New Testament,—the temporal by the eternal, the sensible by the spiritual. Note also the various motive-feelings to which the truth is applied in the New Testament revelation; and see how they

range all the way up from an unenlightened self-love to a love that seeketh not its own, but rejoices exultingly in the truth and service of God.

As an example of the operation of this rising scale of motives, recall the experience and character of the first disciples. Their Christian life began on no higher level than that of an ill-understood self-love. Said Simon Peter to his Lord, —doubtless representing as usual the general sentiment of the Twelve,—"Lo, we have left all, and followed Thee; what then shall we have?" (Matt. xix. 27.) What did they want? Some place of honor and influence in an earthly Messianic kingdom. But let us turn from the Gospels to the memoirs of these same disciples of Jesus, now become apostles, in the Book of Acts: "And when they had called the Apostles unto them, they beat them and charged them not to speak in the name of Jesus, and let them go. They therefore departed from the presence of the council, rejoicing that they were counted worthy to suffer dishonor for the Name" (Acts v. 40–42). They had got something very different from what they had been dreaming of two or three years before. But nevertheless they were more than satisfied. Never till now had they known the fullness of Christian life and blessedness. They had learned the mighty truth of the Cross. They had been made partakers of the Holy Ghost. Christ Himself was now their Reward. "That I may know Christ," was their ambition. Not to be on His right hand or His left, but to have His mind and spirit, just to be with Him, to serve Him, to be counted worthy of suffering for Him,—this was now their supreme and satisfying good. The servant would like to have pay; but these men were able now to receive their Lord's word, "Henceforth I call you not servants, but friends." I have asked why it was that Jesus in His ministry so often addressed the motive of self-love. Let me now ask: If the ministry of Jesus had taken place after Pentecost instead of before, to what motives in the disciples may we suppose that He would uniformly have made His appeal?

Nor is any disciple ready to become an apostle till he has this spirit in him. But if he have it, he will preach it; he will recognize in other Christians the same excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus the Lord that has become the master principle of his own life. And this is our ministerial calling,—that we should be thoroughly furnished ministers, not of the old, but of the new covenant.

One word more. A question may arise as to the suitableness of a motive not yet mentioned,—natural affection. Is it expedient to urge a parent to repentance or religious faithfulness by love for his child; or a child by the desire to please and gratify his parent? I should say: Natural affection often has in it an element of moral love, in which case there is no question; and even when destitute of this motive, it may be used to start a soul toward the right path,—to arouse reflection and sensibility, and induce a receptive attitude toward moral motives. Persuade the parent, then, to live the Christian life for his child's sake. You may do it freely. But in the case of the child, the corresponding motive must be employed with great carefulness, lest it lead to an unmeaning profession of faith.

II. **What is the Way of Access to the Motives?**

It is through the intellect, and by the help of the emotions.

1. *Through the intellect.* The desires and the sense of duty, all the higher feelings, indeed, are dependent for their existence upon knowledge. Sensations are not: hunger, sleepiness, taste, hearing, for example, are direct results in the sensibility of some excitement of the nerves. But a man cannot desire his highest good without some previous knowledge of it; cannot feel morally obliged to choose a certain course of conduct, refusing its opposite, without some knowledge of them both; cannot love his fellow-men with a love that impels him to seek their highest good, without knowing what manner of beings they are, and what that supreme good is; cannot love God in total ignorance of His nature and His relations to mankind.

Hence it is an evil thing for the soul to be without knowledge. And the object of the various processes of sermon-making which we have heretofore considered is to give instruction, to communicate truth. "Because the Preacher was wise, he still taught the people knowledge." But in persuasion the immediate object is to develop and set free the latent force of Christian motives, and deliver it upon the will. It is not to instruct; nor is it to address the nerves of the congregation, and thus excite a delicious or tumultuous or terrifying sensation of sound: it is to use conviction for the purpose of exciting impulses to action.

Let us bear in mind, then, that the motives to which the Gospel is addressed cannot be reached directly. They will respond only to *ideas* of some sort or other. Suppose, for example, you wish to persuade people to do kindnesses to the poor. What shall be the manner of your appeal? You might prove to them the beneficial reactive influence of kind deeds upon their own nature; and thus reach the motive of *self-love*. Or you might remind them of God's commands in this matter; and reach their *sense of duty*. Or you might describe the sad limitations and positive evils of poverty; and reach their *pity*. Or, still again, you might quote and explain such a passage of Scripture as that wonderful word of our Lord, "Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these My brethren, ye have done it unto Me"; and reach their *love for the Saviour*. What, then, has been done? In each case you have used the reasoning power, or the memory, or the imagination, or the Scripture knowledge of your hearers, as a means of getting at an *affection* or a *sense of duty*. You have set before them as sharply and affectingly as possible certain ideas. You have pressed these ideas close up to the sensibility —expecting their presence there to be a power—that the required motive-feeling may awake under their touch. This is persuasion; and so it is *through* the intellect. There can be no other method.

2. *By the help of the emotions.* Here is a class of feelings that do not act as motives. They are such, e.g., as the feeling of beauty, of humor, of joy, of sorrow. Laughter and tears are signs of emotion; and, indeed, it is characteristic of the emotions that they tend toward some sort of physical expression.

Now what has the preacher, or any other orator, to do with these feelings? Nothing; except incidentally or as subsidiary to the quickening of the motives. The excitation of the emotions affords pleasure,—even the emotion of sorrow, or of terror, if its object be sufficiently idealized by distance in space or time. This explains the agreeableness of a certain kind of preaching: touching the motives lightly, it starts the chords of emotion—beauty, wit, joy, pathos, awe—into energetic vibration. That a whole congregation should be "delighted" with a sermon is no proof that the sermon has accomplished its true object. It is sometimes an indication of the contrary.

Unquestionably it is true that the public speaking whose predominant aim and effect are to excite emotion of any kind whatever, may be very good poetry or acting, but is not oratory at all. Just as, on the contrary, poetry and acting whose predominant aim and effect were to excite motives and determine lines of conduct would be poetry or acting transformed into oratory.

How, then, is the excitation of emotions related to the object of Christian preaching? As I have just intimated, it may serve as a useful auxiliary to the excitation of motives. It "draws." It brings people to hear us, and thus makes it possible to do them good. But chiefly it wins attention to the truths preached, and makes the motives more susceptible to their power. You would rather undertake to persuade a cheerful, even-tempered man to put his hand to some difficult enterprise than to persuade a man of despondent temperament. The cheerfulness and the despondency are simply emotions; but the former opens the way to motives which it is the tendency of the latter to enfeeble and obstruct. Or it may be

that in time of sorrow a person will be more easily persuaded to turn his thoughts toward certain great truths and to choose certain great objects, than in the fullness of satisfied affections and hopes. So with the lighter emotions which the preacher —by a sympathetic voice and manner, by showing the beautiful or the wonderful side of things, by pathetic incidents and images—may be able to waken. Let them not be despised. Let them be employed as subsidiary to the delivery of the truth upon the motives. That is where they are useful.

Now, if this distinction between motives and emotions be accepted as valid, a good deal that is commonly said in commendation of "the address to the feelings," "the appeal to the passions," "the raising of the emotions," would seem to be confusing or misleading rather than helpful. What "feelings"? what "passions"? what "emotions"? Why not say, "the address to the motives," and keep the young speaker's attention upon the distinctive character of oratory as the art of persuasion? The tremor of emotion is but subservient to the strong and steady movement of the motives.

Surely it behooves the preacher to use all possible wisdom in making his way to the innermost seat of human accountability and character, the free, rational, moral will. He finds many souls indifferent to the real substance of his message. It is easy to change indifference into antagonism, easy to provoke resistance. Let him please them, let him raise emotions of beauty and sublimity in their minds, let him draw tears to their eyes, if thereby he can better gain access to the mighty motives of duty and love. But with this purpose solely let it be done. For a preacher to stop with the excitation of emotion would be as if a soldier should lay down his arms because, forsooth, he had successfully fought his way to an advantageous *point of attack*.

Read Part II., "Of Persuasion," in Whately's "Rhetoric."

LECTURE XII

THE PROPOSITION—IMPORTANCE, CONTENTS

FROM the text we are now to disengage the subject, or theme, and express it in language. The subject thus verbally expressed becomes the proposition. The one is in the mind; the other on the tongue or the paper. And this embodiment of thought in speech is not only necessary for its communication to others, but helpful also to one's own intellectual vision. We think in unspoken words; to speak them is to make the thinking stand out more clear and distinct. It is thinking aloud—just as thinking is speaking to one's self.

Our study of the proposition will embrace three topics.

I. **Its Importance.**

It might be supposed to be needless. For we have already seen that the text is the subject; and inasmuch as it is the subject expressed, must it not also be recognized as the proposition? What need, then, of another,—a proposition of a proposition?

The answer is, first, that sometimes there is no need. It is the common practice in textual sermons to take the text as the proposition and develop it accordingly. And even when the sermon is to be topical, the text may present the subject in the best possible form for immediate discussion. It may be a simple declaration or question, already well adapted to the purposes of a proposition. E.g., in constructing a topical sermon on the words, "It is more blessed to give than to receive,"

or on such a passage as "How shall we escape, if we neglect so great salvation?"—a proposition of your own would be useless.

But the text sometimes needs an interpretative restatement. If it were read from the Hebrew or the Greek it would have to be translated to the congregation. The fact that it is read from the English Bible by no means implies that it does not need to be interpreted and restated. This restatement of the subject as given in the text is the proposition.

Still again, in a topical sermon we do not usually wish to preach the whole text, but only some one of its topics; and in this case it is clearly incumbent upon us to state the particular topic to be discussed.

Not infrequently sermons are delivered concerning which the most attentive hearer is at a loss to know just what truth or group of truths the preacher would have him consider. Far be it from me to say that such preaching does no good. One defect is not fatal, else all our pulpits had as well be abolished. We may thankfully believe that a goodly number of hearers are like the shopkeeper who could not tell the subject of the sermon when asked, but had gone home and burned up his false measures. To produce such an effect, however, *something* must have been made plain. Let us try to make the whole truth plain and prominent.

It might be said of two classes of sermons, as some witty epigrammatist has said of the university and the college, that the one teaches us everything about something, and the other something about everything. Intellectually the latter kind of preaching is a mist, formless, impalpable, dim, and chill. The popular verdict is rendered in such expressions as "Did not stick to his text," "A scattering talk," "A good sermon, probably, but I couldn't make much out of it"; and, from the more charitable, "He said some very good things." A welcome and satisfying preacher is the man who modestly states his great Gospel theme, and then distinctly unfolds it to

the understanding and applies it to the heart and conscience. One highly important step in this good path is what we have now under consideration. Well begun is half done.

II. **Its Contents.**

Here the whole process of exposition would solicit our attention. For inasmuch as the contents of the proposition are gathered from the text, the question is, What is the entire and exact meaning of this passage? But we have already considered the general subject of Exposition, and need not take it up anew.

The one word I would here emphasize is *thought.* Think deeply on the Scriptures. Fancy is not thought. Memory, voluntary or spontaneous, is not thought. Reading is not thought. Dreaming, either asleep or awake, is not thought. To analyze, to compare, to infer, to see the reality behind the symbol,—this is thinking. In the scene before our eyes in the external world, how many objects do we see distinctly at any one time? Perhaps none. Certainly not more than one; and that the object on which the eyes are focused and the attention fixed. We cannot even number half a dozen objects without counting them one by one. In the whole field of vision there is but a single clear and distinct spot. So with intellectual vision. Hold your mind steadily to that spot—to the center of its field—and keep looking there till the mental eye enlarges to take in all the light. This is thinking; and this is what we are called upon, as expounders of God's written Word, to do.

Which will you be, a slavish imitator or an earnest and thoroughgoing thinker? Without thought, even with a goodly store of linguistic learning in our minds, or with the best of commentaries new and old in our hands, we shall see little more in the Bible than the form or medium of the truth. As George Herbert, quaint and consecrated poet-parson, has said,

> "A man that looks on glass
> On it may stay his eye,

Or, if he pleaseth, through it pass,
And then the heavens spy."

Through the glass of Scripture language the infinite heaven of truth is revealed to the devout, steady, and far-seeing eye.

Do not fly to your "helps" as soon as the text is selected. First think it through unaided. Then, before finally deciding to make a sermon on it, turn to some good commentary and see if haply you have blundered in exegesis. The commentators have more biblical learning than you are likely ever to acquire; and they are your servants. Use them freely, but do not be used by them.

Here is where many of us are feeble and sickly, and many sleep in self-indulgence. A few well-meaning efforts, and off goes the truant mind, allowed to play truant instead of being compelled to do its work. So our thinking is tangential, or would be were it not so crooked and cloudy. Or at best we find some well-worn groove, and go circling round in sight of the text, instead of pressing persistently toward and into it, patiently opening our way into the very heart of the truth. The word that is used for the searching of the Scriptures (*anakrino*) by the Bereans (Acts xvii. 11) is very strong and significant. It is variously translated in the New Testament, —*to ask questions*, *to examine*, *to discern*, *to judge*. Taken in the fullest sense, it means to examine thoroughly, to question the matter under investigation from every point of view, as a witness is questioned in a court of justice, and to form a judgment with the carefulness and discrimination of the judge on the bench. Whether the word was applied to the Bereans in all this fullness of meaning may be fairly doubted; but there can be no doubt as to its full and entire application to the Christian preacher with respect to the texts out of which he is to preach God's Word.

Let us now, from the standpoint of their contents, classify propositions, both admissible and inadmissible.

1. **Admissible Propositions.**

(1) A *perfect* proposition is one that is substantially coextensive with the text. It leaves out nothing. The two are set over against each other like synonymous words. Take the following as examples: Text, "Marvel not that I said unto thee, Ye must be born anew" (John iii. 7); proposition, "The Reasonableness of the New Birth as a Necessity to Spiritual Life." Text, Matthew vii. 7, 8; proposition, "All True Prayer is Answered."

(2) A *good* proposition is

(*a*) One that embodies the principal or most striking truth of the text. Perhaps the passage as a whole is not susceptible of any brief and complete explanatory statement. Or perhaps we purpose to preach only its principal truth. We therefore select this as the most prominent and precious portion of the contents of the passage, and make it our theme. One example will be enough: Text, "I am Jesus whom thou persecutest" (Acts ix. 5); proposition, "The Oneness of Christ and His Church."

(*b*) Another class of good propositions are those which evolve a general principle out of a particular instance as furnished by the text. The Bible is so largely historical that in unnumbered cases principles are taught by means of examples. The single fact incloses and under proper treatment yields up the world-wide truth; and it has been recorded, we may believe, for this very purpose. To take off the outer coverings of fact and circumstance is simply to strip away the husks for the sake of the living fruit within. E.g., your text is the excuse offered by Adam and Eve for their sin (Gen. iii. 12, 13). But our first parents were not exceptional characters in such a matter. Their human nature is the human nature of us all. So we have as our subject "The Tendency of the Sinner to Excuse his Sins." In like manner, from Genesis xxviii. 19 your proposition would not be "The Sanctification of Luz by the Felt Presence of God," but "How the Felt Presence of

God Sanctifies our Daily Life." Or, again, when David replies to Araunah, "Nay; but I will surely buy it of thee at a price: neither will I offer burnt offerings unto the Lord my God of that which doth cost me nothing" (2 Sam. xxiv. 24), it would be a very inadequate idea of his refusal to regard it as a mere illustration of David's personal nobleness of nature. The instance is not unique, but typical. David's feeling with reference to cheapness in religion gives us the general subject of "Cheap Religion"; or, more specifically, "The Sacrificial Element in Worship"; or, if you please, "Love to God Shown by Making Cost for Him."

Sometimes, indeed, we consider the instance simply as representing the character and life of the man. Especially may this be done with interest and profit in the case of incidents in the life of our Lord. Phillips Brooks, one of whose chief traits as a preacher was his keen discernment of principles in acts and circumstances, preached on "The Silences of Jesus" from the text, "But He answered her not a word" (Matt. xv. 23).

Note also that the particular instance out of which the general principle is evolved may be a precept as well as an incident. For example, it was to slaves that Paul sent the thrilling word of counsel, "With good will doing service, as unto the Lord, and not unto men" (Eph. vi. 7). But we do not hesitate to apply the precept to ourselves. The principle of which it is the practical expression is the same, to whomsoever addressed,—to the slave serving his master, the minister serving his people, the king serving his subjects.

The preacher, then, constantly does what Aristotle says of the poet,—"gets the general truth out of the particular fact." Nor is this method peculiar, by any means, to the poet and the preacher. I had the pleasure, not long since, to hear a lecture on one of our common microscopic plants, the *protococcus pluvialis*. The speaker said, "Now I am going to do as our friends the clergymen do, in this lecture; they take a

text, and out of that one little text develop a great principle." So, after a brief and interesting explanation of the little object which he had chosen as his *text*, "our friend the *biologist*" went on to show that it illustrated some of the fundamental conceptions in biology. From a one-celled plant found in the mud of a roof-gutter, and invisible to the naked eye, the skilful lecturer taught certain laws of life. Much more from a single Scripture fact or incident may the Christian preacher set forth the laws of that higher life of which every plant on earth is an humble prophetic type.

(3) Of *merely allowable* propositions we may notice four kinds.

(*a*) Those which embody some truth of the text other than its principal or most striking truth. For example: Text, "I am Jesus whom thou persecutest" (Acts ix. 5); proposition, "The Care of Christ for the Church."

Wide is the difference between *a* subject and *the* subject. In the interpretation of a parable it is essential, as everybody admits, to look first of all for *the* truth; but is not the same principle of hermeneutics applicable to every verse of the Bible? And in using a passage as the basis of a sermon, shall we not prefer to take its strongest and most characteristic idea?

Sometimes it is difficult, or even impossible, to decide as to which is the principal or most striking truth of a text. The following were offered in this class-room as propositions from the words of Simon Peter to the lame man at the Gate Beautiful (Acts iii. 6): "How Love Manifests Itself in Caring for the Poor," "The Importance of Using Everything to God's Glory," "The Service of Love toward our Fellow-men," "The Universal Appeal as Answered in the Gospel of Christ," "How God Answers True Prayer," "The Believer's Power of Enriching Others," "Christ's Glory to be Manifested through Human Agency." Which of these would you select as the principal truth of the passage?

(*b*) Those which state a general principle, as evolved from

the text, and then confine attention to some specific application of it. The passages of Scripture from which such propositions are drawn may be called mottoes (for a motto is a general principle of conduct), but they should not be classed with accommodated texts. The proper description of an accommodated text is, that it does not contain the subject of the sermon at all, but only suggests it through some association of ideas. It is suggestive, not inclusive. But the case of which I am now speaking is radically different. The text contains a principle which has many applications; and this general principle is brought out in the proposition, though with the purpose of discussing it with reference to one of these applications only.

Suppose, e.g., you wish to preach on the subject of the Sunday-school. So great and fruitful a form of Christian work is surely a suitable theme for evangelical preaching. True, you may speak of the Sunday-school in various sermons on more general subjects. But there may be good reasons, also, why a whole discourse should be devoted to this one thing; and there is no reason why it should be preached without a text. You might select Deuteronomy vi. 6, 7. The general proposition undoubtedly is "The Religious Instruction of the Young"; but the special application of it which you propose to make is "The Duty of Sunday-school Instruction," and accordingly it is to this more restricted proposition that you ask attention. Or, for a somewhat different line of thought, you might take the words of Christ to the church in Philadelphia, as given in Revelation iii. 8. Your proposition is "Fidelity to Christ Rewarded by Enlarged Opportunities of Usefulness." But a grand example of this principle is found in the modern Sunday-school opportunity, and the discussion of this subject may make up the body of the discourse.

From the text, "David, after he had served his own generation by the will of God, fell on sleep" (Acts xiii. 36), Dr. William M. Taylor preached on "How We Seek, as Tem-

perance Reformers, to Serve our Generation and our God." From the text, "Glorify God in your body," you may preach against licentiousness, gluttony, and intemperance, or you may take the last of these vices alone as your theme. From the grand personal resolve with which Paul concludes his exposition of the casuistic question whether the Corinthian Christians might eat food which had been offered to idols, "Wherefore, if meat make my brother to stumble, I will eat no flesh forevermore, that I make not my brother to stumble," you would probably preach "The Christian's Regard for the Consciences of Others," or "Christian Obligation as to Personal Influence"; but you might, under either of these principles, confine your discussion to "Total Abstinence." In his sermon on the text, "Redeeming the time" (Eph. v. 16), Wesley, after briefly explaining the meaning of the words, proposes as his subject "to consider only one particular way of redeeming the time, viz., *from sleep*."

Now the opposite class to these propositions is

(*c*) Such as set forth a general idea or truth, when the text presents a less general included under it. The text, e.g., is Matthew xviii. 3; and instead of some such proposition as "The Necessity of Conversion," the subject as announced is simply "Conversion." Or the text is "And He spoke a parable unto them to the end that they ought always to pray, and not to faint" (Luke xviii. 1); and instead of "The Duty of Perseverance in Prayer," the subject proposed for discussion is "Prayer," or perhaps "The Duty of Prayer." Dr. R. W. Dale, from the text, "Ye also helping together by prayer for us, that for the gift bestowed upon us by the means of many persons thanks may be given by many on our behalf" (2 Cor. i. 11), discourses on the general subject of "The Congregation Helping the Minister,"—assigning to the specific subject of the text, "Helping by Prayer," only the place of a subdivision. It is as if one were asked to write a description of oaks or willows, and responded with an essay on trees.

The facility with which young preachers mistake these all-inclusive themes for the specific ones given in their texts is due partly to the expectation of finding them fruitful. It is the mistake of *very* young writers,—who hand their teacher a composition on "Time," or "The World and its Contents," rather than an account of the day recently spent at their grandfather's in the country. But the rule is, the broader the theme the more barren, except in commonplace thoughts and expressions. I have heard of a farmer who divided his big plantation among his sons as they came of age, and year by year at harvest found himself richer for each successive diminution of his estate. One may be land-poor.

Still, there is another side to the question. Very comprehensive themes may sometimes be handled to advantage within the ordinary limits of the sermon. The main points may be briefly and suggestively developed. Take, e.g., the text, "So I prayed to the God of heaven" (Neh. ii. 4). The specific proposition is "Prayer in the Midst of Employments." But the general subject of "Prayer" might be deduced from the text and effectively treated,—perhaps along some such line of discussion as the following: (1) A universal *instinct* of the human heart, (2) shown in revelation as an assured *privilege*, (3) a spiritual *necessity*.

(*d*) Those which give an appropriate name to the text, and thus in a general way convey its meaning and significance. Propositions of this kind are suitable chiefly for textual sermons. "The Preaching of Philip in Samaria" (Acts viii. 5–8), "The Character of King Jehu," "The Parable of the Seed Growing Secretly," "Paul's Thanksgiving for the Philippians" (Phil. i. 3),—are examples.

It is an element of weakness in these propositions that the interest which they excite is not personal, but simply biblical. Immediately on their announcement most people will feel that they themselves are not concerned in them. "Samaria is a long way off; it was a long time ago that Philip preached

there; what special reason is there for the Samaritans' claiming our attention through the whole sermon? Put in the foreground some great and living truth that concerns us here and now,"—something of this sort may represent, for example, the unspoken comments of many minds on the first of these propositions. "The Joyful Effects of the Preaching of Christ" would be more interpretative, and would come closer home to the mind and feeling of the hearers.

LECTURE XIII

THE PROPOSITION—CONTENTS, FORM

WE have learned something about the first of the two classes into which propositions, considered with respect to their contents, may be divided. We must go on now to study the other class:

2. **Inadmissible Propositions.**

Of these I will mention four subdivisions:

(1) Such as set forth a subject which has *no proper connection whatever with the text.* Here, of course, is a clear and total miss, an absolute failure. But it sometimes occurs. I remember to have heard a sermon on "The Unity of the Church," from Matthew vi. 19, 20.

Now, with the exercise of a little perverse ingenuity certain points of connection might be shown, even in these cases, between text and theme. It is quite certain, for example, that if all Christians would heed the injunction of our Lord in Matthew vi. 19, 20, and become more heavenly minded, they would be drawn closer together, despite their denominational affinities and prepossessions; and thus, to be sure, we have found as our proposition, "The Unity of the Church." I have heard a discourse in which the subject of "Consecration" was announced from the text, "He that believeth on Me, the works that I do shall he do also; and greater works than these shall he do; because I go unto My Father" (John xiv. 12). The preacher, after a brief and, as I thought, cor-

rect and promising explanation of this great word of Christ, remarked that, in order to be qualified for these works greater than those of our Lord's ministry, the believer must be a wholly consecrated man; and behold the theme, "Christian Consecration"! In like manner, Cardinal Newman finds the subject of "Self-denial the Test of Religious Earnestness" in the text, "Now it is high time to awake out of sleep" (Rom. xiii. 11). His process of deduction is, briefly, as follows: Are we spiritually awake? It is impossible to know absolutely; but there is a test that may appropriately be applied, viz., self-denial.

By a very moderate amount of this exegetical sleight-of-hand one may force any passage of Scripture to point the way to almost any theme; and no doubt it is a convenient expedient for some who wish to repreach their sermons without repeating the texts. But it is utterly unworthy of even so poor a purpose as that. The earth is similar to the sun, and it is a strong attraction that energizes between them; but no astronomer would announce one of these bodies as the proposition of a discourse on the other. It has been excellently said: "The whole truth may be read, if we had eyes and heart and time enough, in the laws of a daisy's growth. God's beauty, His love, His unity; nay, if you observe how each atom exists, not for itself alone, but for the sake of every other atom in the universe, in that atom or daisy you may read the law of the Cross itself." Does it follow, then, that for a discourse on "The Divine Nature" or "The Cross of Christ" we should take a daisy or an atom as our proposition?

(2) Such as set forth *a truth not contained in the text*, but more or less naturally *suggested by it*. Wesley deduces a proposition of this sort from John iii. 8, "So is every one that is born of the Spirit." He takes the first word of the passage as its pivotal point, "*So* is every one that is born of the Spirit," —that is to say, he possesses this and that trait which prove him to be a child of God. Thus we have, as the doctrine of

the text, "The Marks of the New Birth," which are then declared to be *faith*, *hope*, and *love*. It is obvious even to the casual reader that the passage has no such meaning.

When a text is treated in this manner not through an error in exegesis, but purposely, it is said to be *accommodated*. There was a time apparently when the pulpit was very generally destitute of conscience in this matter of accommodation. Osterwald, in his "Essay on the Composition and Delivery of a Sermon" (published in 1747), after the discussion of homilies, or expository sermons, remarks: "I shall now proceed to those which, in the ancient church, were properly termed 'sermons,' and where the text is used merely as a pretext to the subject for discussion." The charming artlessness of such a confession, at least, would be impossible to the homiletic writer of the present day. Still the pretext method lingers among us, as a relic of the medieval and monkish homiletics, which measured the utility of a Scripture passage by the number of fanciful meanings that it could be made to suggest. Bishop W. Boyd Carpenter, taking as his text John xix. 23, 24,—"Now the coat was without seam, woven from the top throughout. They said therefore among themselves, Let us not rend it, but cast lots for it, whose it shall be,"—preaches on the uniqueness and harmony of our Lord's (*a*) religious system, (*b*) system of morality, and (*c*) personal character. Even so robust a mind as that of Charles H. Spurgeon is not proof against the temptation to indulgence in the pretext method now and then. In his sermon, e.g., on Isaiah xliii. 6, "I will say to the north, Give up; and to the south, Keep not back," after a reasonable explanation of the words, he remarks, "But my intention is rather to utilize than to expound the text," and then goes on to enumerate the things he would have his hearers 'give up," such as *prejudices*, *self-righteousness*, *sins*, *delays*, *quibbling*, *despondency;* and, in a corresponding manner, the things from which they should not "keep back." This the great preacher calls "utilizing" his text.

But perhaps the most distinguished representative of accommodation in the use of texts in the present day is Dr. T. D. Talmage. A few examples will fairly represent the results of this method in his hands. Text, "It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle" (Matt. xix. 24); subject, "The Martyrs of the Needle,"—in other words, the oppressed and half-starved sewing-women of our great cities. Text, "And he made the laver of brass," etc. (Ex. xxxviii. 8); subject, "How the Gospel Reflects the Moral Features of Man." Text, "And they sat down in ranks, by hundreds, and by fifties" (Mark vi. 40); subject, "The Three Groups—the Pardoned, the Seeking, the Careless." There is no lack of sparkling illustration, of powerful imaginative description, of scathing rebuke, of thrilling entreaty, in these discourses. But why should their force be weakened at the outset by an unreal or whimsical connection with the Scripture passages that are supposed to justify and sustain them? Much more to be commended is Dr. Talmage's choice of a text for a subject substantially the same as the first of the foregoing, on another occasion. Text, "So I returned, and considered all the oppressions that are done under the sun," etc. (Eccles. iv. 1); subject, "The Despotism of the Needle."

Dr. Phelps, in his able and exhaustive lectures on "The Theory of Preaching," distinguishes three kinds of accommodation,—that founded on resemblance in sound, that founded on metaphorical resemblance, and that founded on resemblance in principle. The two former he unhesitatingly rejects, but the third kind of accommodation he regards as at least allowable. I will quote you the gist of his argument: "Subjects must be discussed in the pulpit which cannot be introduced by a text in any other way, and yet retain the significance of the custom of employing texts. Which is better,—to introduce the duty of sinners to seek eternal life in company with Christians by the text, 'He that hath an ear, let him hear,' or by the text, 'Come thou with us, and we will do thee good'?

Respecting many themes we have no range of choice. We must do one of three things,—we must preach without a text, or we must take a general text, which as a text means nothing, or we must select an accommodated text" (p. 122).

To this it might be replied, first, that so far as the example cited is concerned, no accommodation is necessary to derive the proposition from the text. In the time of Moses, Israel was the church of God; the Christian church of the present time is not another church, but the same in a later dispensation of divine truth and grace. Hence to invite a man into the church to-day because of the good to be received therefrom is in principle the same thing as to have given him a like invitation to join "the church in the wilderness."

Besides, if this were not so, and a motto, or "general text," had to be chosen, it would be quite unnecessary to choose one so distantly related to the subject as "He that hath an ear, let him hear." There are many passages—e.g., Acts ii. 37–41—that would serve the purpose much better.

Moreover, it cannot be admitted that "a general text as a text means nothing." Is it nothing to show that the truth we teach is an expression of some deeper and larger truth given in the Scriptures? Is it nothing to set forth Christian obligation and opportunity, appearing in the incidental forms of the present day, in the light of some eternal principle? Would Dr. Chalmers's sermon on "The Dissipation of Large Cities," from the words, "Let no man deceive you with vain words: for because of these things cometh the wrath of God upon the children of disobedience" (Eph. v. 6), have derived greater power from the Scriptures if it had been adjusted to them by some mere "resemblance in principle"? Would Dr. Talmage's sermon on "Capital and Labor," from the text, "Whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them" (Matt. vii. 12)? When Richard Watson preached before the Wesleyan Missionary Society on "The Instruction of Slaves in the West Indies," from that sublime Christian precept,

"Honor all men" (1 Pet. ii. 17), was the text as such without significance or effect? On the contrary, it is the very heart and strength of the whole discourse.

A preacher once took for his text the words, "They of Italy salute you," and preached on "The Condition of the Waldenses,"—having been requested by that body of Christians to "present their good wishes to the American churches." Dr. Phelps approves of this accommodation of the text. But which, I venture to ask, is the more reasonable and the more impressive to make an appeal for struggling Italian Christians under the light and power of some such word of Christ as "A new commandment give I unto you, that ye love one another; even as I have loved you, that ye also love one another," or seriously to propose as a text the salutations of certain Christians in Italy in apostolic times to their Hebrew brethren, and from that deduce as a theme "The Condition of the Waldenses"? The fact is, however, that in a case of this kind there is no demand for a text at all. The address is not a sermon. The attempt to give it the semblance of a sermon has the effect only of giving it an air of unreality. No time or place is too sacred, nor any speaker too much of a preacher, for declaring the sufferings and needs of a struggling or persecuted church and making an appeal for pecuniary aid; but why spoil such a Christian speech by beginning it formally with a text?

Let us, then, leave all accommodated texts to those who believe in them, or at least feel themselves shut up to the occasional and select use of them; but as to ourselves, let us not call a lecture or a mere appeal a sermon, nor ever preach a sermon without a text, nor ever preach any other than the text announced. The text must always be in some proper sense inclusive of the subject, never merely suggestive.

A question might be asked concerning the homiletic use of the Gospel miracles. Christ heals a leper, gives sight to a blind man, curses the barren fig-tree. Shall we take the nar-

ratives of such transactions and preach from them Christ as the Saviour and the Judge of men? Unquestionably, if we believe they were intended to teach these truths; and who that has read the ninth chapter of the Gospel According to John can have any doubt on that point? The miracles of our Lord have great didactic value. They are parables for the eye, epiphanies, words of the Eternal Word. To use them as such is to interpret, not to accommodate, them.

So, likewise, with Old Testament typical history and ritual types.

(3) Such as *degrade the text.* I have seen a discourse, by a bright young preacher of my acquaintance, on "Thoroughness," from the words, "It is finished." Probably the proposition may be found in the text; but to propose a theme like that from the supreme word of our Lord on the cross, in which He declares that the awful work of redeeming love has been accomplished, is to my mind inexpressibly painful.

(4) Such as pass by the truth or truths which constitute the real significance of the text and take up *some idea of which the merest hint is given.* For example, what propositions may be drawn from Luke xi. 1? Plainly enough, such as these: "The Need of Prayer," "The Need of Instruction in Prayer," "The Necessity of Prayer as Shown in the Example of our Lord," "The Union of Example and Precept in the Teachings of Jesus," "Unconscious Influence." Also we find here the idea of Reverence. "*When he had ceased*, one of His disciples said unto Him," etc. But good taste and sound judgment could not approve the selection of this as the subject for consideration: it is too incidentally and obscurely given, as compared with the other truths of the text. Or, again, what shall we say of preaching on "The Sin of Gloominess" from the precept, "Rejoice in the Lord always; and again I will say, Rejoice"? Certainly gloominess is the contradictory of joyfulness; and consequently, if the latter is a duty, the former must be a sin. We might treat any Bible precept in a similar manner, for

every positive term and every affirmative proposition has its corresponding negative, and *vice versa;* but the proper place for such "immediate inferences" is the conclusion of the sermon, not the proposition.

To pass by the central truth, and the truths most significantly grouped about it, and devote the discourse to a subject presented in the text only by some remote implication, is either a lack or a perversion of homiletic skill. There is some heat in ice, but it would be a poor affectation to announce "A Lump of Ice" as the subject of a lecture on heat.

III. **Its Form.**

1. *As to structure.* The proposition may be a declarative sentence (a logical "proposition,"—expressing a *judgment*), either affirmative or negative; or it may be only a name or title (a logical "term,"—expressing an *idea*), either simple or modified; or it may be a question,—expressing a *desire* for information.

The same subject, it is evident, may be made to appear in all these forms,—the only exception being that, in the simple titular proposition, the more general subject is expressed,—as shown in the following scheme:

1. Declarative.
   (1) Affirmative. E.g.: "Faith is the Secret of Spiritual Power."
   (2) Negative. E.g.: "There can be No Spiritual Power without Faith."
2. Titular.
   (1) Simple. E.g.: "Faith."
   (2) Modified. E.g.: "The Necessity of Faith to Spiritual Power."
3. Interrogative. E.g.: "Is Faith Necessary to Spiritual Power?"

As to which form of proposition shall have the preference in any particular case, your homiletic instinct, which, if allowed fair play, will become more and more a second nature,

may usually be left to decide. I will only offer a few suggestions. (*a*) The titular proposition is generally preferable, because of its informality and the freer range of treatment which it invites. There is danger, however, that this freedom will be abused. (*b*) The declarative, or logical, proposition demands belief, and accordingly is naturally followed by proof. Hence it is the most suitable for an argumentative discourse (*c*) The interrogative proposition is modest, tentative, conversational, quickening. For example, compare the proposition, "Are Christians Mad?" (Acts xxvi. 25) with "The Reasonableness of the Christian Religion." It is specially appropriate to unfamiliar subjects, to those that are to be treated negatively as well as affirmatively, and to those that are likely to excite prejudice or opposition in the hearer's mind. It wins sympathy by putting the speaker side by side with the hearer, as an inquirer. At the same time it is not inconsistent with the very highest authority. It was the Teacher of teachers who began His discourse with the interrogation, "Unto what is the kingdom of God like? and whereunto shall I liken it?"

2. *As to language.* Here, if nowhere else, it behooves you to be a caretaker in the choice of words. Much of our preaching may be extempore, some of it impromptu; but he would be a bold preacher who should leave the framing of his proposition to the moment of delivery. Because these few words, standing forth as an interpretative restatement of the text, are the germinal truth of the whole discourse.

Hence the proposition must be free from all verbiage, ambiguities, technicalities, pedantry. It must be precise and clear; it must express what you mean, neither more nor less. Brevity is very desirable. So the proposition is explicit, not obscure, let it be as concise as possible. Take the two following, offered as exercise-work in this class-room, as examples: Text, Acts xvi. 33, 34; propositions, "Some Results of Believing in Jesus," "The Results of the Transforming Power

of the Gospel as Shown in the Case of Those who Believe and Accept It." The former is the more forcible, pleasing, and rememberable.

To be sure, there may be beauty,—such as comes from perfect adaptation to a worthy end; but a proposition that awakens in the hearer's mind the exclamation, "Was n't that elegantly expressed!" has missed its aim. Last night a friend sent me word to look out of the study window at the oak-tree in my yard. It was lovely; branch and twig and withered leaf were all sheathed in ice, and in the soft splendors of the winter moonlight shone forth transfigured. But where was my tree itself? Only suggested, shrouded away in a labyrinth of crystals. So may a subject of discourse be hinted or suggested, rather than stated, in a beautiful glow of words.

Now, what I am thinking of here particularly is metaphorical expressions. These are often chosen as at once the readiest and the most attractive embodiments of a subject. But it will generally be found that your happy metaphor has served in the stead of more definite thinking. Ask yourself, "Just what do I mean by it?" The answer will make the idea clearer to your own mind,—will show, perhaps, that you yourself did not quite know what the meaning was. The metaphor came too soon; it brought analogy and vividness where the one essential was precision. Who can imagine a more perfect figure in which to set forth the power of Christian example than the declaration of Jesus, "Ye are the light of the world"? But it is a part of its very perfection that it is a figure and needs to be interpreted; and to announce as our proposition from this text, "Christians the Light of the World," is simply to restate the text without interpretation. In like manner, when the Apostle bids us "bear one another's burdens" (Gal. vi. 2), is it not our first step to inquire into the meaning of the figure,—what is a "burden," and what is meant by one man's bearing the burden of another? And if so, where is the propriety of returning to the figure in the proposition, and

announcing as our subject "Burden-bearing" instead of "Mutual Helpfulness," or whatever we may believe the meaning to be? Or, instead of saying, "My subject is 'Corruptible Crowns and the Incorruptible Crown'" (1 Cor. ix. 25), let us say "Corruptible Rewards and the Incorruptible Reward," or, coming closer to the heart of the text, "The World's Example of Earnestness."

Nor is it only in the case of metaphorical texts that a metaphor may be offered as the proposition. I have heard a sermon from John xiv. 1–3, in which the preacher announced as his subject "A Casket of Jewels," and then proceeded to "take them out," one by one, and present them to the congregation.

You will be slow to accept my opinions on this point. Let me, therefore, sustain them by two excellent authorities. Ripley, in his "Sacred Rhetoric," says: "A caution has been reserved for the close of this chapter against retaining in the statement of a subject metaphorical language which may be in the text. The thought conveyed by such language should be stated in literal terms, else both the preacher and the hearers may become more occupied with the metaphor than with the thought itself. . . . Thus, instead of using our Lord's words —'Take My yoke upon you'—as a string upon which to fasten a number of independent paragraphs concerning the yoke of repentance, the yoke of faith, the yoke of profession, the yoke of righteousness, etc., let the real meaning of this language be ascertained. Our Lord was encouraging His hearers to subject themselves to His guidance. Let the passage, then, be the text of a sermon on 'Subjection to Christ.'"

Dr. Phelps is even more emphatic: "Why is a metaphorical description of a crime not allowable in the enactment of criminal law? Why is a metaphorical boundary of real estate not pertinent in a title-deed? For a similar reason, figure is not becoming in a proposition. Literalness is essential to simplicity in anything which professes to be a statement and nothing more. . . . Figurative propositions and divisions are

sometimes vindicated on the ground of their raciness. One preacher, martial in his tastes, proposes as his theme 'The Great Battle of the Lord Almighty.' Another, in more feminine mood, proposes to contemplate 'The Rainbow of Divine Promise.' A third, of a more practical turn, asks attention to 'The Sin of Being a Stumbling-block.' . . . A sixth meditates at eventide, and invites to 'A Walk about Zion.' These, and an interminable catalogue like them, many would defend as being pithy forms of statement. They prick curiosity; they please fancy. True; but does this shield them from the censure of good taste? I think not, because, valuable as raciness of statement often is, it ought not to take precedence of simplicity. In stating any business in hand, raciness should be sought in plainness of speech and directness in coming to the point. Figurative hints are out of place" ("Theory of Preaching," pp. 342, 345).

I will add two remarks. The first is, that we must discriminate between the proposition and the title of a sermon. The proposition, indeed, is sometimes used as a title. But not always; and a mere title may properly enough take the form of a metaphor. It need only hint or imaginatively suggest the subject of discourse.

The other remark is, that faded or even fading metaphors need not be excluded from the proposition, but only metaphors that are distinctly recognized as such. For instance, the words *corruptible* and *incorruptible*, in one of the examples just quoted, are fading metaphors. To exclude these would be to mistake precisionism for precision.

The study of propositions is an excellent homiletic exercise. Let me therefore give some additional examples of propositions, admissible and inadmissible, with the request that you classify them with respect (*a*) to their contents and (*b*) to their structure:

"Sin in Believers" (2 Cor. v. 17) (Wesley); "Christ Never Ceased to Pray" (Luke xi. 1); "Religion Natural" (Acts

xvii. 27) (Bushnell); "There is No Conflict between Christian Kindness and Good Judgment" (Matt. v. 42 and 2 Thess. iii. 10); "Faithfulness in Great and in Small Matters" (Luke xvi. 10) (Maclaren); "The Significance of Sunday-school Work" (Matt. xviii. 5); "Free to Amusements" (1 Cor. x. 27) (Bushnell); "Christianity Mysterious, and the Wisdom of God in Making It So" (1 Cor. ii. 7) (South); "Spiritual Darkness in Believers" (John xvi. 22) (Wesley); "The Limitations of Life" ("Remember my bonds," Col. iv. 18) (W. M. Taylor); "The Power of Selfishness in Promoting the Honesties of Commercial Intercourse" (Luke vi. 33) (Chalmers); "The Use of Opium and Tobacco" (Col. iii. 17); "The Harmony between a Noble Undertaking and a Beautiful Beginning" ("The Beautiful Gate of the temple," Acts iii. 10) (Phillips Brooks); "In what Respects is Love Greater than the Greatest Gifts?" (1 Cor. xii. 31); "Paul in Cæsarea" (Acts xxv. 4); "The Confession of Thomas" (John xx. 26–29); "The Need which Comes to Men of Simply Being Fed by God, of Ceasing from Forthputtingness and Self-assertion, and Simply Being Receptive to the Influences which Come to Them from Divinity" (John vi. 10) (Phillips Brooks); "Man is Such a Being that, *a priori*, We might Well Expect God to be Mindful of Him and to Visit Him" (Ps. viii. 3, 4) (Marvin); "Perpetuity of Christian Influence" (John xi. 26); "The Intermediate State" (Heb. xi. 39, 40); "The Abuse of Sacred Things" ("And he called it Nehushtan," 2 Kings xviii. 4); "The Superiority of Christianity to All Other Religions" ("What do ye more than others?" Matt. v. 47) (Hugh Price Hughes); "The Sinner Exposes to the Power of his Enemies that which is Most Precious to Him" ("I have given the dearly beloved of my soul into the hand of her enemies," Jer. xii. 7); "The Apostles' Determination to Go Forth as Fishers of Men" (John xxi. 3); "The Duty of Keeping our Engagements" ("He will ever be mindful of His covenant," Ps. cxi. 5); (*a*) "Was John the Baptist's Life a Failure?" (*b*) "Success and Failure in Life" (Mark vi. 29); "The Uniform and Necessary Tendency of Thrift to Greater and Greater Prosperity, and the Equally Uniform and Necessary Tendency of Worthlessness to Deeper and Still Deeper Penury" (Luke xix. 26) (Marvin).

LECTURE XIV

THE DIVISIONS—PRINCIPLE, DISCOVERY

DIVISIONS are subordinate propositions. They mark the main points of progress in the discussion. Nearly all preachers make use of them, more or less; though, as in the case of text and proposition, some persons would dismiss them from the pulpit as an antiquated and obstructive formality.

Preaching of the vague and watery type will be found to disparage divisions. It must, indeed, from the very instinct of self-preservation,—somewhat as a seller of commodities of uncertain quantity and quality in the market, will despise weights and measures, and prefer dimness to daylight. He would rather not be called to account. This type of public speech can lay claim to great antiquity. Cicero describes it as it appeared in his day: "Their speech is so confused and ill arranged that there is nothing first and nothing second; there is such a jumble of strange words that language, which ought to throw a light on things, involves them in obscurity and darkness; and the speakers, in what they say, seem in a manner to contradict themselves."

I have reason to believe that some young preachers regard divisionless sermons as belonging to "the kind of preaching for the times." And if we may trust so competent a witness as Dr. Isaac Watts, the same opinion was held nearly two hundred years ago. "It is a certain fault in a multitude of preachers," he says, "that they utterly neglect method; or at

least they refuse to render their method visible and sensible to their hearers. One would be tempted to think it was for fear their auditors would remember too much of their sermons, and prevent their preaching them three or four times over. But I have candor enough to persuade myself that the true reason is they imagine it to be a more modish way of preaching without particulars. I am sure it is a much more useless one." Indeed, it is a new and modish "way of preaching" now, and was so then, only because it is so very old, and has long been superseded, in the general usage of the pulpit, by a better.

But to claim that divisions sensible to the hearer are absolutely essential to good preaching would be a wretched exaggeration. Some of the most effective preachers in all churches seldom announce them; and it is difficult sometimes, even upon a close analysis of their discourses, to discover an orderly progress of thought. When it can be *discovered*, it is not *apparent* to the ordinary reader, and was probably still more obscure to the hearers. Read a sermon of this sort; close the volume; then attempt to recall the outline of discourse, emphasizing the principal thoughts. Try the same process upon one whose outline is plainly disclosed; and you will not need to be told which method of treatment makes the truth clearer and more rememberable. Still, it would be a daring critic who should assert that only the latter class of discourses represents truly excellent preaching.

Again, where the sermon is quite a brief exposition and appeal along a line of not unfamiliar thought, say from fifteen to twenty minutes in length,—about the time usually taken, e.g., in the Episcopal pulpit,—divisions may be needless. Charles Kingsley's "Village Sermons" and his "Town and Country Sermons" are admirable examples. Many an instructive and earnest Gospel message is delivered in this form. It is that of the prayer-meeting talk or the exhortation, somewhat better compacted and unified. But for the most part our preaching should be elaborate enough to require that the

attention of the hearer shall be distinctly directed to the leading ideas of the sermon. This will appear, I trust, as we spend a few minutes in the consideration of

I. **The Principle of Divisions.**

The necessity of order to the acquisition and communication of knowledge gives a law to mental movements which we can no more set aside than we can dispense with the three laws of motion in the physical world. "Let all things be done decently and in order" is as truly a uniformity of the human intellect as it is an authoritative Christian precept. In fact it is given by the Apostle with special reference to "prophesying" and "speaking with tongues." To be scatter-brained is to take the path toward irrationality. To think and speak methodically is to be a gatherer and a giver of knowledge. And this necessity in the very make of our minds, is the underlying principle of divisions in public discourse.

Any one who does not make a habit of reading a book backward; or proving his point by flinging forth his reasons in an indiscriminate jumble; or applying a truth before it has been explained or even stated; or delivering an address from the introduction forward, or from the conclusion backward, or from any intermediate point in either direction, as fancy may suggest,—may fairly be summoned as a witness to the necessity of order in thought and speech. Any one who speaks in sentences, using subjects and predicates with their appropriate grammatical belongings, condemns himself in every sentence he utters as an advocate of intellectual anarchy.

Every discourse, then, must exist in some determinate and organic order. It has been said, "No subject which has been put together piece by piece is living." True enough; but it is also true that no subject is living which does not somehow come organically "together." Which is more regular in form, a leaf or a stone? and which is alive? In nature, organization and life are inseparable; wherever one appears, there is the other also, and nowhere else.

Now what is the demand of "divisions"? Not that the sermon, in its various parts, shall be gathered up and mortised together, somewhat as a chair or a table is manufactured. Not that it shall come into existence through some sort of accretion. Stones are formed by accretion; but *life*, even in the humblest moss or mold, *takes in* its food, and assimilates before using it. The materials of the genuine, living sermon are not aggregated; from whatever source drawn, they are taken into the preacher's mind, and by the power of his own intellectual and spiritual life, transmuted, and thus fitted for their place and function. The process is not mechanical nor crystallogenic, but vital. The discourse is not made, but only *made to grow;* it is the natural development and expression to others of the truth which lies germinant in the preacher's own mind. But who will contend that growth is disorder? or that the principal parts of a plant or an animal are not easily distinguishable from each other—*in the higher types?* The demand of divisions is that the main line of thought shall be made distinctly conscious to both speaker and hearer. If this result can be reached without divisions, let them be rejected as encumbrances. But ordinarily it cannot be; and divisions are no more encumbrances to a sermon than well-differentiated organs to one of the higher plants or animals.

Or, to find an illustration in another sphere of creative activity: A picture is not a piece of patchwork. The true artist does not think of a fine tree that he has seen somewhere, a huge frost-splintered rock that has attracted his attention somewhere else, and then a brook, and then a group of clouds, and so on, and putting these side by side on his canvas, call the product a picture. Looking with quiet, brooding eye upon nature, he evokes the spirit of the scene,—instinctively sees the ideal beauty, or solemnity, or terror, or aspiration that struggles for expression in it; and lets that spirit of beauty or of awe take artistic shape for itself, offering it the use of such materials and such skill as he may have at command. But it

by no means follows that his landscape is so enshrouded in dreamy lights and shadows that a rock cannot be distinguished from a tree, or one mountain-peak from another.

I have proceeded thus far on the assumption that the preacher has in his own mind a definite plan of discourse, and that when he adopts what may be called the method of concealment, he intentionally avoids making the successive steps of his thought known to the congregation. It is also true, however, that the habit of concealing the plan tends to produce neglect of it on the part of the preacher himself, and thus impairs his own thinking.

Some of us older preachers might tell an instructive experience in this matter. I have sometimes taken up a divisionless sermon, and, with an uneasy sense that somehow it was sadly lacking in completeness and force, asked, "Just what have we here,—first, secondly, thirdly,—what is my treatment of this subject?"—and have been rebuked to find how meager and disjointed a production these simple inquiries exposed. Almost certainly we overestimate the number of thoughts in our sermons, as we overestimate the number of people in our congregations, until we take some orderly account of them. It is easy to fancy ourselves traveling intellectually, when we are only rambling, and doubling on our own track. "I preach about fifty minutes on that subject," we are sometimes heard to remark. But the question is not How long are we going? but How far do we go? Some of us will wander and lose our way in the undergrowth of thought, despite all admonitions and remedies. But those who resolutely set themselves to correct this nerveless and debilitated habit of mind in the treatment of a subject may do so by, first, knowing whence they start, secondly, foreseeing the end which they mean to reach, and thirdly, noting the way-marks along the path of their thought. *Divide and conquer.*

The use of divisions has been objected to on various grounds.

1. That "it originated with the schoolmen." But it were a pity if those pious and cogitative recluses, the thinkers of their age, should not have transmitted to succeeding generations something worthy of acceptance. And so they did. Is it to be supposed, for example, that an intellect like that of Thomas Aquinas, entitled to be named with Pascal's or Newton's, and having a pious heart and a steady will behind it, should labor for years, even in a dark and bigoted age, to no purpose? We should be doing the schoolmen no small injustice to suppose their thoughts altogether occupied with such problems as the number of spirits that can dance together without inconvenience on the tip of a pen; or whether an angel in passing from one point to another in space is compelled, like a mortal, to pass all the intermediate points; or why it is that plants cannot grow in the fire; or the exact difference between efficacious and sufficient grace. There is little danger of our imitating their dreary attempts to exhaust the subject in hand, with their endless "quiddities" and "ampliations," divisions and subdivisions,—as did John Howe and Dr. John Owen and other great divines of the seventeenth century. But we may without hesitation follow in our own way a method which they were perhaps the first to use, and of which they were undoubtedly the greatest abusers.

2. That "it interrupts the flow of thought." "Let me go," says the objector, "where my thoughts would carry me, in the composition of a sermon." Certainly; but which of your thoughts? Have you none that are feebler than others? none that are irrelevant? none that are unfit to be trusted in the highest places? The interminable story-teller goes where his thoughts carry him; not one of the thousand immaterial circumstances he narrates but arises in his consciousness under some law of association; none the less, however, does his hearer receive the sympathy of all reasonable persons. Give yourself up, in preparation for the pulpit, to the guidance of your best thoughts, the strongest, highest, most pertinent; and they

will probably constitute the plan of your sermon. Verily, no part of this whole process is unnatural or lacking in spontaneity; unless, indeed, the preacher should insist that his sermon shall wear its skeleton, like a crustacean, a low-grade creature, *on the outside.*

3. That "it is unfavorable to unity of discourse." Now, if instead of this it were said that there is danger to unity in the use of divisions, the objection might be admitted; though it could probably be shown that the rejection of divisions is at least equally liable to the same danger.

In textual preaching, for example, when the unity of the text is not recognized, each division may be discussed independently of the rest; and thus we may have two or three sermonettes placed side by side, with no one supreme idea controlling them all. We may preach three ten-minute sermons from Acts xvi. 25 ("But about midnight Paul and Silas were praying and singing hymns unto God, and the prisoners were listening to them"), on "Prayer," "Praise," and "Christian Influence" respectively, and call them one sermon. But the man who should do this would be likely to discourse very excursively without divisions. On the other hand, the preacher who keeps steadily to his one line of thought, the development of his one specific theme, without divisions, may be safely trusted, in the use of them, to perceive and honor the unity of his text,—to find, for instance, in Acts xvi. 25, a noble illustration of "Spiritual Liberty," and to treat prayer, praise, and the exertion of Christian influence as expressions of this state of the soul. The Christian may *pray*, and *praise*, and *do good, anywhere and in any outward condition:* these would be his divisions.

The subject must be one; the divisions are the well-ordered interpretation of the subject: how then can they prove inimical to unity of discourse?

4. That "it will restrain passion, and hence is not oratorical." Indeed, it will smother it to death, if carried to the

ridiculous extreme that has sometimes been practised. I have in mind such "textual gymnasts" as Dr. Joseph Parker has wittily caricatured in "Ad Clerum": "Some preachers are outline mad; they are nothing but outline; they plan beautifully, but build nothing. Give them the word *thinking* as a text, and they will see in it: (1) Man in a reduced physical state—*thin;* (2) Man in a high social state—*king;* (3) Man in a truly intellectual state—*thinking*." So will an accomplished word-inquisitor stretch a very good Scripture word on the rack, and torment it with etymological pulleys and screws, till it is fain to yield up secrets which it never did possess. He may be sure, however, that, whatever skill he may acquire by such procedures, they will leave him more and more heartless.

But why should genuine sunlight play the antagonist to heat, and endeavor to drive it off the field of action? On the contrary, do they not love to blend their forces and march on together?

True, there are certain ebullitions of feeling which a recognized order of discourse, however simple and natural, will tend to restrain,—mere wild outbursts of unmeaning emotion, sentiment degenerating into sentimentality and pathos into whining,—such as seem to have marked the disorders of the Corinthian church, and of some Methodist meetings. But if this be so, great is the gain of it, rational, spiritual, oratorical. For, if this volume of fervid feeling were kept in line with the truth and delivered upon the hearer's will, even though some of it should be sacrificed in the process, the loss would be more than counterbalanced by the precious gain. Two narrow ribbons of iron, parallel, five feet apart, carefully laid upon solid wooden ties,—see them extending from city to city and from ocean to ocean, through all the land. What good can they do? Not one inch has ever a train of cars been moved by them. So far from creating energy, they are consumers of it. Nevertheless, we have not yet discovered a method of safe and rapid

locomotion without them. They keep the train in its path, and, with some curves and windings and some gentle ups and downs, conduct it by the shortest practicable route to its destination. The outline of your sermon may have a somewhat rigid and mechanical look; but though it do nothing more—and it will do much more—it may keep the energy of thought and feeling from running to waste. It will facilitate movement, and will guarantee that movement shall be progress.

The use of divisions *is* oratorical; whereas the excursive and literary structure of the pulpit essay or meditation is not. For oratory is persuasion through conviction; and conviction is by explanations and proofs well discriminated and well ordered. The steady and straightforward tread of discussion from point to point is distinctively an oratorical method.

In brief, you will find that every objection to the use of divisions is invalid, except as use is confounded with abuse; and that the objection serves only to lift into clearer light the great and universal principle of order upon which they rest.

I am not yet ready to drop this part of our subject. I would persuade you to make another experiment. Select some sermon in which the succession of ideas is concealed rather than distinctly marked; analyze it carefully; then, should this analysis show that no regular course of thought is observed in the sermon, or, if observed, that it has not been made apparent even to the interested hearer, consider with an unprejudiced mind whether either of these features shall be regarded as a defect. To illustrate: take Phillips Brooks's sermon on "The Joy of Self-sacrifice." We shall probably find, after reading it, that the subject and the introduction remain clear and distinct in our minds; but not the discussion. Examining this, then, more closely, we discover the following plan:

(*a*) By many this is regarded as impossible.
(*b*) Nevertheless it is possible.
(*c*) It solves the problem of happy lives.
(*d*) It gives power to do our work more perfectly.

Should we not have been better pleased, however, if these thoughts had been shown, in their relations to each other, somewhat more plainly? Indeed, I would venture to suggest that the first two seem to prove the *possibility*, and the latter two the *value* of joy in self-sacrifice; and that, if the subject had been presented in this form, it would have lost nothing, and would have gained in clearness, force, and permanence of impression. In other words, comparing two highly gifted preachers of the same faith and spirit, I should take Frederick Robertson to be a better sermonizer than Phillips Brooks.

Now I have chosen for this example a striking and noble discourse: a sermon of poor quality could, of course, much less afford to be lacking in distinctness. But I think we must regard the essay-sermon, whatever high qualities it may possess, as an unfinished production,—only in a state of *becoming* what its true nature urges it to be. However perfect in its kind, it is not of the most perfect kind.

It does not follow, however, that we should be unwilling to preach till we have thought a subject through, and are prepared to express it in the best-defined form. Be urgent in season, out of season; proclaim the Word; remember how much larger a work is preaching the Gospel than delivering sermons, elaborate or otherwise. The large-souled preacher from whom our last example was taken has said, in reply to the complaint of some ministers that it is impossible to produce two sermons a week: "It is impossible, if by a sermon you mean a finished oration. It is as impossible to produce that twice as it is undesirable to produce it once a week. But that a man who lives with God, whose delight is in the study of God's words in the Bible, in the world, in history, in human nature, who is thinking about Christ, and man, and salvation every day, that he should not be able to talk about these things of his heart, seriously, lovingly, thoughtfully, simply, for two half-hours every week, is inconceivable, and I do not believe it. Cast off the haunting incubus of the notion of great ser-

mons. Care not for your sermon, but for your truth, and for your people; and subjects will spring up on every side of you, and the chances to preach on them will be all too few."

That is a true Christian testimony, and you cannot let it sink too deep into your memories and your hearts. But the question before us now is, What shall be the ideal excellence toward which we look in the production of sermons? And one feature of this excellence is, not indeed that the sermon should ever be what would be characterized as "a finished oration," but that its movement from beginning to end shall be both *orderly* and *apparent*. There is a place for intellectual as well as for physical invertebrates; but it is in vain that they deny the superior claims of the great back-boned family.

II. **The Discovery and Invention of Divisions.**

Choice must be made between two methods of division, the textual and the topical. Which shall be preferred in any particular case will be determined by the proposed form and contents of the sermon. If the textual method be chosen, the work is not one of invention, but of

1. *Discovery*. We have to ascertain and disengage the leading thoughts of the text. As in the case of the proposition, it is a matter of interpretation. We must understand the passage, enter into its innermost spirit and life, and then set forth its truths in their order and unity. It is an analytic process, resulting in a series of interpretative statements.

I would offer you this guiding principle: Textual divisions are designed to make the congregation sensible of the meaning, spirit, and aim of the text. Is this a truism? If so, it greatly needs to be reiterated; for the disregard of it is extremely prevalent. Many preachers seem to assume that any great idea or truth fairly implied in any word of the text, considered separately and apart from all the rest, may serve as a division, if one be pleased to employ it as such. This mistaken assumption appears in such forms as—we shall see in the next lecture.

LECTURE XV

THE DIVISIONS—DISCOVERY, INVENTION

HOW is it that a textual division sometimes fails to unfold the true life of the text? The failure may occur in various ways:

1. *Making unreal distinctions between different parts of the text.* When a writer uses synonymous words or equivalent expressions, it is not two separate ideas that he presents, but one only. Such words and expressions are frequently met with in Scripture; and exposition must not separate ideas, however different in form, that are one in substance.

The Hebrew parallelisms in the poetry of the Old Testament are familiar examples. Take the first verse of the Thirty-second Psalm: "Blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered." We are not to suppose that here are given two elements of blessedness; and accordingly consider, first, the forgiveness of transgression, and, secondly, the covering of sin. The latter member of the verse is the former member repeated in figurative language.

Or take, as an example, Isaiah xl. 31: "But they that wait upon the Lord shall renew," etc. Maclaren, in one of his sermons, finds here the promise of "three forms of unwearied strength,— . . . strength to soar, strength to run, strength to walk." By the first is meant the "power of bringing all heaven into our grasp"; by the second, "power for all the great crises of our lives, which call for special, though it may be

brief, exertion"; by the third, "patient power for persistent pursuit of weary, monotonous duty." Can we think that these three distinct forms of Christian activity, or any other three, can be *found* in the varied imagery of such a passage? Why not be content with the prophet's threefold expression of the one joyful and inspiring thought of immortal strength? In like manner, when the apostle James exhorts: "And let patience have its perfect work, that ye may be perfect and entire, lacking in nothing" (James i. 4),—are we to suppose that the word *perfect* represents a certain quality of Christian character, *entire* another, and *lacking in nothing* still another? It is simply the not uncommon case of a redundant expression employed for the sake of emphasis.

2. *Making the distinction too prominent between certain similar parts of the text.* Every difference is not strongly enough marked to serve as the basis of a division. E.g., it would be foreign to the spirit of the Apostle's exhortation in 1 Corinthians xv. 58 ("Wherefore, my beloved brethren, be ye steadfast, unmovable"), to discuss, first, steadfastness, and, secondly, unmovableness; because unmovableness is only a greater degree of Christian steadfastness. The thought is one,—*steadfast even to immovability*. So, in Psalm cxxxix. 14 ("I will give thanks unto Thee; for I am fearfully and wonderfully made"), we should promote confusion rather than order and unity by declaring, first, that we are *fearfully*, and, secondly, that we are *wonderfully*, made. The two ideas are too nearly akin to admit of such treatment. Another example: Text, Galatians vi. 14; divisions, We glory in the Cross because by the Cross (1) The world is crucified unto us, and (2) We are crucified unto the world.

3. *Taking as divisions two or more variant interpretations of the text.* E.g., the word of God to Cain, "And if thou doest not well, sin coucheth at the door," has been supposed by commentators to mean, either *sin is the cause of the not doing well*, or *the not doing well is itself sin*, or *a sin-offering is at*

hand. All these are great and significant truths. But to take them as the divisions of a sermon on this text would be to build the discourse on a conjectural interpretation, two thirds of which must necessarily be false. Yet even this method is sometimes employed. I once heard a sermon on the words, "Have ye received the Holy Ghost since ye believed?" (Acts xix. 2), in which the preacher stated that, according to some authorities, the proper rendering is, "Did ye receive the Holy Ghost when ye believed?" But as both these translations bring out important truths, he would ask our attention, first, to the gift of the Holy Spirit at the time of conversion, and, secondly, to the gift of the Holy Spirit subsequent to conversion. He should have felt under obligation to determine for himself the true interpretation (no difficult matter in this case), and to preach that only; or else have let the text alone.

4. *Ascribing fanciful meanings to certain parts or the whole of the text.* To write into a passage what we then proceed to read out of it is to do worse than nothing toward its true explanation. And if these personal fancies are made conspicuous as divisions of a sermon, they become the more misleading and hurtful.

What have not the sayings of our Lord suffered at the hands of exegetical dreamers! Even the sober and scholarly Trench suggests that, in the parable of the leaven, it is "a woman" that is said to hide the leaven in the meal, because the church "evidently would be most fitly represented under this image." "So again," he continues, "why should *three* measures of meal be mentioned? It may perhaps be sufficiently answered, 'Because it was just so much as at one time would be commonly mixed' (Gen. xviii. 6; Judges vi. 19; 1 Sam. i. 24). Yet it may be that we should attach a further significance to this number three. Some perceive in it the spread of the Gospel through the three parts of the then known world; others again, as Augustine, to the ultimate leavening of the whole human race, derived from the three sons of Noah, which is nearly the

same thing. And those who, like Jerome and Ambrose, find in it a pledge of the sanctification of spirit, soul, and body are not upon a different track; if, indeed, as has not been ill suggested, Shem, Japheth, and Ham do indeed answer to these three elements, spirit, soul, and body, which together make up the man,—the one or other element coming into predominance in the descendants severally of the three. But leaving this"— Yes, one such exposition is certainly one too many; and so, "leaving this," let us quit forever this fairy-footed tripping over the deep and reasonable truths of holy Scripture.

5. *Opening and elaborating the meaning of certain words of the text, out of all proportion to their significance as used by the author.* Now words, though the best symbols of thought that we have, are sadly imperfect. Their very vastness and variety of meaning involve practical imperfections. Not only do they often but "half reveal the thought within," but often they suggest some widely different thought. When two persons use the same word it does not follow that they mean the same thing; nor, indeed, when the same person uses the same word on two different occasions. Who is conscious, in the act of utterance, of all the meaning of his words separately and individually considered? It is only that part of the meaning which is germane to our present purpose that we intend to express. And it is the business of the interpreting mind of the hearer or reader to know what that meaning is.

Take, e.g., some word in every-day use,—such as *tree*. It includes, as to its logical "extension," all the trees, big and little, upon earth. Besides, it includes all the essential parts and properties of a tree,—root, trunk, branches, leaves, the power of elaborating and circulating sap, etc. But who has all this in mind in using the word? Not even Linnæus or Professor Asa Gray.

Or take the word *me* as an example. It is a still more richly freighted word. It represents the human personality, the self, the one supernatural being in the world, living and

acting in the moral realm, accountable, immortal. But what philosopher even is consciously aware of all this, and of all the rest of the word's contents, when in ordinary conversation he speaks of himself?

Or, again, the word *mother*, the symbol of the most unselfish and beautiful relation of our earthly life, laden with all tender and hallowed associations,—how often, in uttering it, do we put upon such a word all that it is able to bear?

Supposing, now, we should hear some little child say, "Mother, let me go out and play under the tree," and should undertake to give a rational and impressive explanation of these words, it would hardly be done on this wise: "We find in this request three things worthy of consideration; first, a relationship than which earth has nothing more beautiful and dear,—*mother;* secondly, the identical, enduring self,—*me;* and thirdly, the most prominent and important class of objects in the vegetable kingdom,—*tree.*" Simply because, while the words mean all we have claimed for them and immeasurably more, the child did not mean this by them.

Similarly in explaining a sentence in a book (other than the Bible) we do not carve it up mechanically, and dilate upon each word's separate wealth of meaning. To do this would be to treat it, not as a sentence, but as unrelated words which, for some reason or without reason, have been placed side by side.

Nevertheless, many of us claim the liberty of expounding the Scriptures very much after this manner, in the divisions of our sermons. Take as an example an often-preached text—"No man careth for my soul" (Ps. cxlii. 4)—with these divisions: first, The most precious of all objects of human care is the soul; secondly, The obligation is upon us to care for the souls of others as well as our own; thirdly, The neglect of this spiritual care is shamefully prevalent, even among those who acknowledge the obligation. Very true and worthy of earnest consideration are all these propositions; but what the

Psalmist meant by his pathetic complaint was merely that his friends had forsaken him, and no one cared whether he lived or died.

Another occasion, very tempting to some preachers, for this straining and forcing of the text, is the interpretation of metaphors. Good examples may be found in Macmillan's "Bible Teachings in Nature." In his exposition of Isaiah lxiv. 6, "We all do fade as a leaf," he says: "Let us trace out this analogy, and see what light the picture of nature sheds on the Bible. (1) Leaves fade *gradually*. . . . (2) Leaves fade *silently*. . . . (3) Leaves fade *differently*. . . . (4) Leaves fade *characteristically*. . . . (5) Leaves fade *preparedly*. . . ." In Isaiah liv. 12, "And I will make thy windows of agate," he finds "windows of *faith*, windows of *feeling*, and windows of *spiritual character*." These ideas, however excellent in themselves, and however elegantly expanded by their author, represent what the prophet's figures might be *made* to mean, rather than what they do mean.

A more common form of this exorbitant development may be seen in such examples as the following. In the text, "The counsel of the Lord standeth sure, the thoughts of His heart to all generations" (Ps. xxxiii. 11), Richard Watson calls attention to, "first, the divine counsels generally, and, secondly, the particular view of them which the text contains." Here the first division is augmentative and divergent, instead of truly interpretative. "The particular view which the text contains" is the one view with which the homiletic analysis of it is concerned. Why insist on treating a topical passage textually? No sort of cleavage can change a Lombardy poplar or a palmetto into an oak: the branches into which it is split will be dead. Saurin's division of the text, "Godliness is profitable," etc. (1 Tim. iv. 8), are, "first, What is godliness? and, secondly, What are its advantages? The first division is developed by four subdivisions: (*a*) Godliness supposes knowledge in the mind, (*b*) It must be sincere, (*c*) It supposes sacrifice, (*d*)

It is characterized by zeal and fervor." But surely there are not these two great subjects in this verse,—the *nature* and the *advantages* of godliness. The latter is the subject. On the former nothing is called for, unless it be a few prefatory words.

Dr. Phelps quotes with approbation the following divisions of the text, "Men ought always to pray, and not to faint" (Luke xviii. 1): "(1) The text commands a duty which a modern philosopher has pronounced 'the most stupendous act' of which man is capable,—'to *pray*.' (2) The text enforces the duty of prayer by appeal to the supreme faculty of our nature,—'Men *ought* to pray.' (3) The text suggests that, so far as we know, no other order of being exists, to which prayer is a duty so imperative as to man. (4) The text implies that success in prayer depends on that state of mind which insures its constancy,—'Men ought *always* to pray.' (5) The text teaches that prayer is an act of courage in times of extreme emergency,—'Men ought always to pray, and *not to faint*.'" "Does not this plan illustrate," he asks, "how hackneyed texts may be freshened, and how biblical authority may be given to a suggestive train of thought, by the mere sense of fullness in the discussion, produced by a textual division elaborated and formally stated?" I should be compelled to answer that it does not. It rather shows how divisions may be so overdone as to defeat their own object, and become an element of weakness and a means of the dispersion of thought.

It is here that the old scholastic method of dividing texts according to subject, predicate, and copula belongs,—as an example or two will show. Take these from Dr. Robert South: Text, "The wages of sin is death" (Rom. vi. 23); divisions, (1) What sin is, (2) What is comprised in death, (3) In what respect death is properly called the wages of sin. Text, Matthew v. 8; divisions, (1) What it is to be pure in heart, (2) What it is to see God, (3) How this purity of heart fits and qualifies the soul for the sight of God. Traces of this

method, once widely prevalent, may be found in Wesley's sermons. In the sermon on "The Scripture Way of Salvation," from Ephesians ii. 8, "Ye are saved through faith," he proposes to inquire, "first, What is salvation? Secondly, What is that faith whereby we are saved? Thirdly, How are we saved by it?"

It must be conceded that to plan a discourse from the standpoint of the grammatical structure of the text is extremely easy. Any one may soon learn to apply the method to hundreds of passages with the greatest facility. Also, that the plan it produces is dry, mechanical, disproportionate, divergent, and diffusive is equally plain. For in texts of this class the treatment required by subject and predicate—if any at all be required—is merely that of preliminary explanation. The *copula* is the heart of the text; and to unfold that should be the leading idea and aim of the discourse. In other words, the third division in the examples I have just quoted is more properly the main proposition. The other two are of the nature of *introduction;* and the texts are most suitable for topical treatment.

Let George Herbert, with his fine poetic sense of unity and his finer spiritual sense, tell us what kind of sermonizing he has found good unto edifying:

"The parson's method in handling of a text consists of two parts: first, a plain and evident declaration of the meaning of the text; and, secondly, some choice observations drawn out of the whole text as it lies entire and unbroken in the Scripture itself. This he thinks natural and sweet and grave. Whereas the other way, of crumbling the text into small parts, as the person speaking or spoken to, the subject and object, and the like, hath neither in it sweetness, nor gravity, nor variety, since the words apart are not Scripture, but a dictionary, and may be considered alike in all the Scripture."

Now the faults of which I have spoken are, one and all, violations of the principle of unity. They put asunder and

keep apart that which is vitally grown together. Vinet reminds us that we are "to respect the life of the text, to *develop rather than to decompose it.*" I fear we often kill our texts in the effort to make their life manifest. They die on our anatomical hands. If we knew and felt them as we might, it would be impossible to perpetrate such vivisection. How could we take some great and urgent utterance of prophet or apostle, or of Him whose words, above all others, "are spirit and life," and, instead of setting it forth, to the best of our ability, in its intense unity and power, suffer ourselves to be carried away by a counterfeit logical spirit, so as to cut asunder that whose very life is in its oneness? "First, secondly, thirdly, fourthly"—if we will; but let them be the sympathetic *development* of the text, not its decomposition.

So much, then, for the discovery and statement of what is actually in the text. Supposing now that we choose to preach topically, we must get our divisions through some process of

2. *Invention.* For we have now left the text, and are dealing only with the theme it has furnished. A word, a phrase, or at best one short sentence—our proposition—lies before us. Unlike many texts, perhaps it does not offer a single subordinate topic. Here, then, is needed not only the analytic faculty, but more especially the creative imagination. Insight is still necessary, but not sufficient. We must use the finding-glass of our intellectual telescope. It is original work in a high degree, and cannot be done by rule and measure. Nevertheless, there are guiding principles by which one might be helped even in the construction of an original machine; much more in the construction of a discourse, which is not nearly so difficult.

I will make three suggestions:

(1) *Let the invention of divisions and of materials go on together.* One thing at a time is a good rule, but not universally applicable. Sometimes we do each of two things better for doing them simultaneously. Thinking is not public speaking, yet the orator does some of his best thinking on his feet; and

no one will deny that, on the other hand, the thinking may help the speaking. So here; while seeking divisions, you will find some of your best materials, and conversely. In fact, are not the divisions themselves the most important part of your materials?

Detain and cherish any ideas arising in your mind that seem to be related in any vital way to your theme. If the right arrangement of them fail for a time to appear, do not be disturbed. Gather materials. Glimpses of order, and then luminous *lines* of thought will soon begin to gleam through the darkness. Or, if this kind of "wisdom lingers," while "knowledge comes" in abundance, then set yourself deliberately to turning your little chaos into a fair and ordered sphere. This will not be hard to do if you are sternly willing to cast aside all unsuitable matter. The spontaneous action of the mind will help your intention; for it is of the nature of mind to love and create order. Matter and law, materials and divisions, are allies bound to support each other. From the very first encourage them to go together.

The testimony of Dr. James W. Alexander, in one of his "Thoughts" on sermon-making, is suggestive: "I follow a brief penned at my table during a short interval. I made it thus: mere catchwords—took a general thought to start with, let the next come of itself, then the next, and so on without effort. It served well. The thing to be noted is, that in a few moments, *by letting the mind flow*, and not interfering with the flow, one may jot down materials for a long discourse. It was not merely heads: these are barren, they are disconnected; it was concatenation, it was *genesis*."

(2) *Choose your point of view.* There are many ways of looking at any object. What we see of it will depend not only on our eyesight, but equally on our standpoint. A visitor passes through the buildings of a woolen manufactory. What has he observed? If he be a machinist, the machinery; if a manufacturer, the cloth; if a philanthropist, the appearance of the operatives. No two persons looking upon the same

scene note just the same things; because the mind of each approaches it from a different direction. So, likewise, with the contemplation of a truth. Give the same text and theme to two preachers: how different, in all probability, the two treatments! But this will also be true of any one preacher on different occasions. He will see this or that in his theme, according to his mental condition and the object which he has in view at the time. Therefore fix upon your point of view (what the logician would call your "principle of division"), and look at the subject from that direction.

Shall I mention some of these principles of divisions, with illustrative examples?

1. *Characteristics.*
   Example: "Christ's Revelation of the Father" (John xiv. 8, 9). Shows us how God regards
   1. Our every-day life.
   2. Our troubles and sorrows.
   3. Our sins.
   4. Our future.

2. *Aspects or Relations.*
   Example: "The Grace of Contentment" (Phil. iv. 11).
   1. As opposed to a regretful lingering over the past.
   2. As opposed to an anxious looking forth into the future.

3. *Points of Comparison.*
   Example: "In what Respects are the Works of Christian Believers Greater than the Works of Christ in His Personal Ministry?" (John xiv. 12).
   1. In convincing and converting power.
   2. In the development of Christian character.
   3. In the diffusion of Christianity.

   BISHOP GRANBERY.

4. *Principles of Conduct.*
   Example: "The Use of Money" (Luke xvi. 9).
   1. Gain all you can.
   2. Save all you can.
   3. Give all you can.

   WESLEY.

5. *Sources.*
Example: "The Dangers of Contempt" (Matt. xviii. 10).
The sources of contempt are:
1. Want of knowledge.
2. Want of wisdom.
3. Want of reverence.

BISHOP W. BOYD CARPENTER.

6. *Applications.*
Example: "The Highest Help Only can Satisfy our Needs" (Ps. cxxi. 1).
1. In temptation.
2. In sorrow.
3. In doubt.
4. In sin.

PHILLIPS BROOKS.

7. *Observations.*
Example: "The Importance of Living to God on Common Occasions and in Small Things" (Luke xvi. 10).
1. We know very little about the real importance of events and duties.
2. Even as the world judges, small things constitute about the whole of life.
3. God is observant of small things.
4. All efficient men, when they have been men of comprehension, have also been men of detail.
5. There is more real piety in adorning one small than one great occasion.

BUSHNELL.

8. *Motives.*
Example: "The Public Confession of Faith in Christ" (Acts ii. 41).
1. It commits the young Christian in the presence of his fellow-men to the service of Chirst.
2. It increases his unconscious good influence.
3. It brings him into church associations.
4. It proclaims Christ the Saviour to the world.

9. *Explanatory Statements.*
Example: "The Good Man's Satisfaction" (Prov. xiv. 14). Personal goodness solves the problem of

1. Safety.
2. Happiness.
3. Greatness.
4. Helpfulness.

10. *Explanatory Reasons.*
Example: "Why should the Pulpit Set Itself against Intemperance?" (Ezek. xxxiii. 6).
1. Because of the unnumbered and incomputable evils that flow from it.
2. Because it is one of the hugest obstacles in the way of the Gospel.
3. Because it is God's order that the church should take the lead in every great moral reform.

BISHOP C. D. FOSS.

11. *Proofs.*
Example: "Obligation to God a Privilege" (Ps. cxix. 54).
1. Without the sense of obligation there could be no such thing as criminal law.
2. There could be no society.
3. It is virtually the throne of God in the soul.
4. It ennobles personal liberty.
5. It is a source of joy.
6. It sets a man in immediate relation to God.
7. It is proven to be a privilege by personal testimony.

BUSHNELL.

12. *Positions to be Refuted.*
Example: "Popular Excuses for Sin" (Gen. iii. 12, 13).
1. No harm in it.
2. Others do it.
3. I must live.
4. My motive is good.

13. *Inferences.*
Example: "Our Life the Gift of God" (Job x. 12).
Therefore we are under obligation
1. Not needlessly to damage or shorten it.
2. Not to spend it in antagonism to the divine love and will.
3. But to use it in God's name.

4. And to yield it up humbly and willingly at His command.

Note also that sometimes you will see fit to apply more than one principle of division in the same sermon. An example or two—in which for the sake of greater distinctness I will give subdivisions—may suffice.

1. *Observations and Proofs.*
   Example: "The Power of Unconscious Influence" (John xx. 8).
   1. Some general views of the subject.
      (1) A mistake to suppose this influence insignificant because unobtrusive.
      (2) There are two modes of self-expression and influence, the conscious and the unconscious.
   2. Proofs of the power of unconscious influence.
      (1) The instinctive imitation of children.
      (2) The respect for others which takes the place of this instinctive imitation in later life.
      (3) The most active feelings and impulses are contagious.
      (4) No reason to believe spiritual influence an exception.
      (5) Much of what is ordinarily supposed to be direct influence really indirect.

   BUSHNELL.

2. *Classes and Explanatory Reasons.*
   Example: "The Folly of Trusting our Own Heart" (Prov. xxviii. 26).
   1. A few classes of men who trust their own heart.
      (1) The young.
      (2) Those who look into their own hearts for their God.
      (3) Those who suffer their feelings to decide their doctrines.
      (4) Those who substitute feelings for duties.
      (5) Those who depend upon their own hearts for a supply of strength to resist temptation or to support in trouble.
   2. Some reasons for the assertion of the text.
      (1) Because he trusts to what he knows is unworthy.
      (2) And what he knows is wicked.

   DEEMS.

3. *Principle and Objections.*
Example: "Foreign Missions" (John xiv. 6).
1. The principle.
2. Objections to be noticed.
(1) Christianity is great enough to be trusted to recommend itself.
(2) Missions should begin at home.
(3) The average missionary is dull and uninteresting.
(4) We best do our duty to heathen lands by conferring on them the blessings of civilization.

LIDDON.

4. *Fact and Meaning.*
Example: "The Illusiveness of Life" (Heb. xi. 8–10).
1. The deceptiveness of life's promise.
(1) Our senses deceive us.
(2) Our natural anticipations deceive us.
(3) Our expectations, resting on revelation, deceive us
2. The meaning of this deception.
(1) It serves to lure us on.
(2) It fulfils the promise in a deeper way.

F. W. ROBERTSON.

Now these are some of the more common and significant lines of treatment. Seek out others for yourself. It may be done with no great difficulty by the analysis of sermons. Do not rest content with less than an easy familiarity with the ways in which the best preachers have found it expedient to treat their subjects. Know the points of view that may be taken. Then, in your own case, you may expect some suitable principle of division to offer itself with the occasion for its use.

(3) But above all, as in evolving the proposition from the text, so here, *concentrate attention upon your theme.* Deal with it as steadily and patiently as if it were a problem in mathematics. The mathematician knows that he can make no progress whatever with a wandering mind. He *must* attend. Learn the secret of his success; and yours will be as sure as his. Ill-defined objects will reveal their outlines; the unseen

will become visible. But there must be no self-deception or superficiality: you must quietly determine to explore the place. Even when compelled to relax attention somewhat, linger with faithful feet in the neighborhood. Do not cease from this simple and strenuous effort of thought till everything is plain before you.

Have we not all heard sermons whose plans were so just and striking, every way so admirable, that we were fain to ask by what happy art they were produced? But there is no mystery about it, save the inscrutable mystery that attends upon every movement of thought, as upon all simple things. There is no other art in finding and following thought-lines than that which is employed in tracing out the rude figure of a bird, or deer, or human face which may sometimes be discerned on the side of a weather-beaten precipice. You have only to *keep looking*. "But do not these happy plans sometimes just come to a preacher?" No doubt; in rare instances they are given in dreams; but it is through some sort of reaction in a thoughtful, meditative mind. They do not come to the indolent and inattentive.

A brilliant psychological writer has asked: "Why do we spend years straining after a certain scientific or practical problem, but all in vain,—our thought unable to evoke the solution we desire? And why, some day, walking in the street with our attention miles away from that quest, does the answer saunter into our minds as carelessly as if it had never been called for,—suggested possibly by the flowers on the bonnet of the lady in front of us, or possibly by nothing that we can discover?" We may not be able to tell why this is so; but we may be sure that the prolonged effort to reach the solution had much more to do with producing the result than the accidental "flowers" or other circumstance.

Living in the preaching spirit, you will be delighted to experience some very fruitful spontaneous action of the mind. Texts, themes, plans, materials, quickening ideas, will fre-

quently, at any odd hour, come flitting into your mind—and out again, unless you detain them. They are specially likely to come after preaching, Sunday night or Monday. By all means bid them welcome. Take out your note-book and write them down. Then, at the proper time, let them be developed into sermons. But I am not now speaking of these experiences. We are considering the case of the voluntary invention and arrangement of thought,—of thinking up and thinking out ideas.

A loving attention,—that is the secret; and it is open to all who will learn it. Do your feet drag heavily, while you long for wings to soar withal? Are you coveting the gifts of genius? What if they were already offered you and have heretofore been refused? "Genius is a continued attention." "Genius is a protracted patience." "Genius is the faculty which begins by loving exceedingly and getting close through love to the noblest forms of life." "Genius is an infinite capacity for work, growing out of an infinite power of love." There is in you, even in *you*, this infinite possibility of love and labor. Use it now and always on your theme.

LECTURE XVI

DIVISIONS—REQUISITES, MINOR TOPICS

YOU will not be sorry to learn that I shall finish the discussion of divisions to-day. Two topics remain to engage our attention.

III. **Requisites of Divisions.**

Here, as everywhere, it is an element of power not to be easily satisfied. The soothing compromise, "That will do," should not be too complacently accepted. Be exacting in your requirements. Let not "the good become the enemy of the best." Nothing but your best will "do." The purposed result of our work is the highest conceivable,—"that we may *present every man perfect in Christ Jesus*"; let the means and instruments we employ, great and small, be as perfect as possible.

Concerning the requisites of divisions, then, I would say:

1. *Let them be your own.* Some preachers who would regard it highly objectionable to appropriate any other part of a sermon without acknowledgment, seem to look upon a good outline as common property. But the proposition and divisions are the very heart of the discourse; the outline is the *innermost* line of thought. If this need not bear the marks of the preacher's individuality, why should any other part of his preaching?

Richard Cecil would not even consult a commentator till he had wrought out the body of his discourse. He says: "I will not foretell my own views by going first to commentators. I

talk the subject over to myself, I write down all that strikes me, and then I arrange what is written. After my plan is settled and my mind has exhausted its stores, then I would turn to some of my great doctors to see if I am in error; but I find it necessary to reject many good things which the doctors say; they will tell to no good effect in a sermon."

It is easier, doubtless, to buy a series of ideas with one's money than to think it out with labor of brain and heart. I met with an opportunity not long since, in the second-hand department of a book-store; the compilation was called "Five Hundred Sketches and Skeletons of Sermons, Suited to All Occasions, with Nearly One Hundred on Types and Metaphors." It did not seem to be a piece of what De Quincey has so happily called "the literature of power." Very much better, probably, as well as bigger, is Simeon's "Horæ Homileticæ," which is published in twenty-one octavo volumes, and contains over twenty-five hundred "skeletons." But I will persistently hope that you may be too conscientious and intellectually high-minded to stoop to any such helps. What if you do have to spend a whole morning sometimes upon a theme that refuses to develop? Such a morning may be extremely well spent. It may not make you a sermon, but it is making *you;* and in proportion as you *become*, good sermons will come in their season. It intensifies feeling, deepens insight, toughens the fiber of your mind, while the plagiarizing method debilitates and deludes. What if you are only a beginner? Begin to walk, or at least to crawl, alone. Cripples, not children, use crutches. Did you learn to write by substituting some fair and regular copy for your own feeble scrawl? Study plans, in the sermons of able preachers, just as you would study anything else in other men's preaching,—for instruction and stimulus, not for transference to your own manuscript. Whatever their intrinsic excellence, they are not good when thus transferred, because not the expression of your own thinking and experience.

"But did not the great Augustine advise that in pressing circumstances the preacher should use other men's discourses? Have we not now 'The Sermon Bible,' well recommended by ministers in conspicuous places? And has not Mr. Spurgeon published more than one volume of 'My Sermon Notes,' intended, not as models and stimuli only, but also for bodily appropriation by those who 'can fill up a framework, but cannot construct one,' and for others in 'time of special pressure, bodily sickness, or mental weariness'?" Very well; if such an offer is responded to by that which is highest in your nature, accept it gratefully and use its benefits with the utmost fidelity. Be sure, also, not to conceal the fact that only the "filling up" is your own; in other words, if you consent to be treated as a weakling, do not take the position of a falsifier. But I am slow to believe you are called to be that kind of preacher. Read much, think more, pray always in the Holy Spirit, and keep yourself in the love of God; then let your sermons, in subject-matter and arrangement, and from plan all the way out to voice and gesture, be your own. So shall they possess, whatever their defects, the indispensable elements of reality and personality. "The sermon is the man preaching."

Dr. Lovick Pierce, in his early ministry, uneducated and well-nigh penniless, got possession of "Simeon's Plans," which were very much used by the preachers with whom he associated; and he tells us that the book was of great advantage to him: "The contempt I felt for the book and for myself, when I awoke to the littleness of employing another man's mind to do my thinking and planning, was an upward step in my mental pathway."

2. *Let them be divisions of the subject as announced, and not of some more general subject afloat in the mind.* An example will suffice for explanation. In Dr. William M. Taylor's sermon on Zechariah xiv. 20 he interprets the text as "indicating that *the great design and ultimate result of the diffusion of the*

Gospel is to promote holiness," and he distinctly states, "This is the topic to the illustration of which I propose to devote the discourse of this morning." Then, after giving hardly more than a page to this topic, he proceeds: "Bearing in mind these principles, then, let us advance to the consideration of the subject which I have announced, and inquire, in the first place, what holiness is." His second division is, "How this holiness is to be obtained"; and the third, "Where this holiness is to be manifested." Now turn back to the subject announced and see if these are divisions of it. On the contrary, the author has dismissed that subject with a few remarks, and taken up for discussion some such broader theme as "The True Christian Holiness"; and this, properly enough, is the title of the sermon.

3. *Let them be distinct from one another.* We have here a rule of logical division,—of the separation of a class into its subclasses. Its violation results in what are called cross-divisions, with their inevitable confusion of thought. For example, should we attempt a classification of sermons themselves by dividing them into (1) textual, (2) topical, (3) revival sermons, our divisions would evidently communicate or cross,—class (3) being included in the other two. The very common classification of sermons as (1) textual, (2) topical, (3) expository, is another example of this error.

In rhetoric the principle is the same, though somewhat more difficult of application. Taking as a text, e.g., Exodus xv. 23–27, and drawing from it these lessons: (1) The troubles of God's children are attended with numerous blessings; (2) Nevertheless they are of such a nature as to make themselves severely felt; (3) But God has ways of making even these troubles sweet and wholesome to the soul; (4) Then, after the troubles are over, there comes abundant rest and joy; (5) And in them all is seen the divine providence,—we should inevitably find, before reaching the last division, that we had already been discussing it. It is communicant with more than

one of the others. Especially is the idea of God's making "our troubles sweet and wholesome to the soul" a part of the idea of "divine providence." In the following example, taken from one of Dr. Deems's sermons, the first division is inclusive of all the rest: "The Slavery of Sin: (1) The slave is deprived of the rights of freemen; (2) He has no choice of employment; (3) He has no accumulation of property; (4) He has no power to rise; (5) He is liable to be sent off at any time."

Each division must be a step in advance,—none of them a bewildered circling about and recrossing of ground that has already been passed over.

4. *Let them be coördinate.* Here again we have a rule of logic: the subclasses into which a genus is divided must be of the same rank or order. Trees, e.g., may be divided into *deciduous* trees and *evergreens*, but not into *deciduous* trees and *cedars*.

In this matter also we find rhetoric more difficult than formal logic. But this only means a greater necessity for careful and discriminating thought. Take the following as an example: Proposition, "The Use of Money"; divisions, (1) Make all you can, (2) Save all you can, (3) Give all you can *to the poor*. And here is one in which the error is not quite so easily corrected: Text, "Hallowed be Thy name"; proposition, "Filial Reverence toward God"; divisions, (1) Our prayers should be offered in the spirit of reverence, (2) Profanity is the most flagrant irreverence, (3) To murmur at God's providence in time of poverty or sickness is irreverent. Here numbers (2) and (3) are not of equal rank with number (1), but are subdivisions respectively of some such propositions as the following, which are coördinate with number (1),—viz., (2) Our conversation should be conducted in the spirit of reverence, (3) Our attitude toward the providence of God should be reverent.

Sometimes a single division is made coextensive with the

proposition. The following was offered as an exercise in this class-room: Text, Mark xiv. 3–9; proposition, "Love the Condition of Acceptable Service"; divisions, (1) How love manifests itself, (2) The relation of love to service. As soon as this outline was read to its author he saw that in the second division he had done little more than repeat his proposition in somewhat different language.

Now errors, like truths, have a strong affinity for one another. Accordingly we find that non-coördinate divisions are likely to be at the same time cross-divisions. E.g., if in the Psalmist's words, "It is good for me to draw near to God" (Ps. lxxiii. 28), we should find the subject, "The Good of Communion with God," and name as our divisions such particulars as (1) Deliverance from care; (2) Spiritual joy; (3) Power for daily work; (4) Happiness,—we should fall into both these errors. For Nos. (1) and (2) are a part of No. (4), included in it, subordinate to it. The same may be said of the following plan, which was presented here for criticism not long since: The Resurrection of Christ (1) comforts our hearts, (2) confirms our hopes. The latter truth is included in the former: one of the ways in which the Resurrection comforts our hearts is by confirming our hopes.

5. *Let them be few in number.* Make an estimate of the time at your disposal. The sermon may be, let us say, from thirty to forty minutes in length. For introduction, proposition, transitions, and conclusion we may allow ten or fifteen minutes. This leaves from fifteen to thirty minutes for amplification. How much time is required for the development of a division,—stating, explaining, proving, illustrating, applying, as need may be? Evidently you cannot develop many.

But *should* the sermon be forty minutes long? Not ordinarily. Where the preacher addresses the same congregation Sunday after Sunday, thirty minutes is time enough. Even on extraordinary occasions, indeed, it would seldom be amiss to recall the famous dictum of Whitefield, that there are few conversions after the first half-hour.

As the proposition need not exhaust the text, so the divisions need not exhaust the proposition. A certain measure of completeness, to be determined by the preacher's own intuitions and judgment, without formal rules, is all that can be demanded. Meagerness, inadequacy, "making nothing out of the subject," must, of course, be avoided; but to exhaust your theme—you had as well attempt to drain off an inlet of the "multitudinous seas."

Too much analysis will give your discourse the form of a philosophical disquisition, at the cost of the characteristic sweetness and force of Christian preaching. There is a good suggestion in the idea of the school-boy who said, in reply to a question of his teacher, that he preferred half an apple to eight sixteenths: "More juice. Cut up an apple into eight sixteenths, and you lose half the juice in doing it." The sermon is neither an essay or meditative effusion, on the one hand, nor an exposition in philosophy, on the other. It is an argument, an oration, an orderly and earnest talk. Hence it must give the hearer the sense of guidance and progress, not of sauntering, and not of exploration. Direct, continuous, accelerating, is the true oratorical movement.

Seldom will you be able to handle more than four divisions effectively. Often the best possible number is *two*.

6. *Let them consist, as far as possible, of strong and suggestive thought.* I have been careful here to put in a saving clause. We may not always be able to command a series of ideas which we should be willing to characterize as strong and suggestive. But let us at least refuse to employ divisions that are feeble and barren. They must be points of significance, astir with the life-forces of the subject. This for two reasons: it makes them peculiarly effective in themselves,—in the bare announcement of them; and, chiefly, the amplification will take its character, to a greater or less extent, from the divisions.

Sometimes, however, these directive and governing ideas are about the feeblest part of the whole discourse. They are

picked up from the very surface of the subject, or obtained by some mechanical method. Or perhaps a division is introduced for the sake of some illustration or other subordinate matter; which is an exact reversal of the true order. A division may indeed be suggested by materials already gathered, and may utilize them in its development; but they must be accepted for its sake, not it for theirs.

One mode of dividing a text, which has found favor with some preachers, is to take up its various parts and simply state their rhetorical form and quality. We may select an example from Spurgeon: Text, Ezekiel xxxiii. 11; divisions, (1) A solemn declaration, (2) An earnest exhortation, (3) A tender expostulation. But this method is more formal than fruitful. To be truly strong and suggestive, textual divisions must interpret the *substance* of the text, and not merely describe its forms.

7. *Let them be expressed with clearness and precision*,—like the proposition.

8. *Let them be arranged in the oratorical order.* The office of logic is to convince the intellect; the office of oratory, as we know, to persuade the will. The sermon being a distinctively oratorical or persuasive address, its arrangement throughout should be oratorical.

Note, however, that this never implies an illogical arrangement. The two orders are not alien to each other, and much less are they in conflict. They coincide. Evidently this would be expected; for it is only through instruction and conviction that the rational will is reached with motives. The examples already given of divisions will illustrate this coincidence.

But here is the point that requires attention. It is possible sometimes to arrange the divisions of a discourse in more than one logical order; and in this case we must choose that which we believe to be oratorically the best. Let us take as an example a plan that we have already had before us in a different connection: "The Highest Help Only can Satisfy Our Needs"

in (1) temptation, (2) in sorrow, (3) in doubt, (4) in sin. Here the arrangement would have been equally logical if the idea of *sin* had been made the *first* division instead of the last. But the oratorical reasons are decisive for placing it last. It awakens more powerful feelings, and hence more powerfully influences the will than does any of the other ideas; and the most effectual process of persuasion is that not simply of cumulation, but of climax. The place for the strongest motive is the *last*. Or, again, in such a subject as "The Difficulty and the Possibility of Holy Living," the order I have here observed in stating the line of treatment, and the reverse order, are equally logical. But they are not equally persuasive. It would make a stronger final impression to show that a certain course of conduct, though difficult, is *possible*, than to show that, though possible, it is *difficult*.

Note, moreover, that in determining the true oratorical order, reference is had to the specific object of the sermon. *Whom* do I wish to persuade, and *in what direction?*—is the question to be asked. Suppose, e.g., your subject is "Grieving the Holy Spirit," and you propose to show that the Spirit may be grieved by *worldliness*, by *unbelief*, by *direct resistance*, and by *indifference*. What order shall be chosen? More particularly, which topic shall be given last? It depends upon what class of persons you are trying especially to reach,—upon which of the sins enumerated you are trying especially to expose and condemn. Let that be the *last*. So, likewise, in preaching on "The Holy Spirit as the Helper of our Infirmities" (Rom. viii. 26), and speaking of such infirmities as *ignorance*, *distraction of mind*, and *despondency*, if you have one class of halting souls rather than another in mind, give their infirmity the position of emphasis. Again, in preaching on a *good* and an *evil life*, or on *good* and *evil influence*, you will consider whether your object is more particularly to encourage the Christian or to dissuade the sinner, and will arrange the order of your two topics accordingly.

Criticise the following sets of divisions with respect to oratorical order:

"Looking at Things Rightly" ("Thou hast well seen," Jer. i. 12).

1. We are all apt to make egregious mistakes when we look at our heavenly Father's providential dealings.
2. If we possessed more spiritual discernment, we should not so often torment ourselves with sinful anxieties about the future.
3. A right spiritual discernment will check our impatience in regard to the issue of God's wise dealings and discipline.
4. There is a right way and a wrong way of looking at things.

CUYLER.

"Christ's Method of Dealing with Honest but Doubting Inquirers" (Matt. xi. 2–6).

1. He called their attention to the appropriate facts.
2. He declared the blessedness of those who are not offended in Him.
3. He did not rebuke.
4. His answer was not direct and complete.

"Christian Giving" (Acts iii. 6).

1. The gift.
2. The opportunity.

"Wisdom toward the Unbelieving" (Col. iv. 5).

1. The highest practical wisdom toward the unbelieving is a pure Christian life.
2. We must present them with a likeness, not a caricature, of religion.
3. We must not comfort them in their sins.
4. We must have respect to their prejudices and adapt ourselves generally to their state of mind.

"Stewardship" ("Give an account of thy stewardship," Luke xvi. 2).

1. Of real and personal estate.
2. Of mind.

3. Of the religion in which we find our peace and happiness as Christians.
4. Of influence.
5. Of health and life.

LIDDON.

IV. Some Minor Topics.

1. *Shall the divisions be announced only as they arise for discussion?* The object of preannouncement is to present the subject at the outset in the unity of its leading ideas. The dangers attending it are formality and abatement of intellectual interest. Three cases may be noted:

(1) A *twofold division* may be preannounced with good effect. This can be commonly done without the appearance of formality; nor will the edge of curiosity be dulled, because such a division of the subject discloses little more than an ordinary proposition. Indeed, it may often be equally well expressed in a single compound proposition. It is even better to say, e.g., "My subject is 'The Difficulty and the Possibility of Holy Living,'" than to say, "My subject branches into two divisions: (1) The difficulty of holy living; (2) its possibility. So, when F. W. Robertson announces as the two divisions of his sermon on 1 Kings xix. 4, "(1) The causes of Elijah's despondency, and (2) God's treatment of it," he is only stating, in the form of preannounced divisions, what might have been given as the proposition of the discourse,—"The Causes of Elijah's Despondency, and God's Treatment of it."

When the two divisions take the form of a contrast the unity is more perfect, and the effect of announcing them as one proposition stronger. For example: "The Irrevocable Past and the Available Future" (Robertson); "The Fatal Power of the Sorrow of the World, and the Life-giving Power of the Sorrow that is after God" (*ibid.*); "The Unlawful Use and the Lawful Use of Law (*ibid.*); "The Pleasures and the Penalties of Sin."

(2) If we have *more than three divisions*, preannouncement may be expected usually to detract from the interest of the sermon. In addition to the reasons already indicated, it will foreshadow a longer and more analytic discussion than the congregation will probably feel prepared for. In such a case, if it should seem to be demanded that the main thoughts be brought together in one view, a skilful recapitulation after the discussion may serve the purpose better than preannouncement.

(3) How about *the intermediate case*,—when we have three divisions? In the generality of instances you will probably see no sufficient reason here for preannouncement. Yet it sometimes seems to suit the subject well, especially when well done. No one would say that Maclaren is uninteresting in the announcement of his threefold theme from Luke vii. 47: "So that now I have simply to ask you to look with me for a little while at these three persons representing for us the divine love that came forth among sinners, and the twofold form in which that love is received. There is, first, *Christ, the love of God, appearing among men*, and *the foundation of all our love to Him*. Then there is *the woman, the penitent sinner, lovingly recognizing the divine love*. And then, last, there is *the Pharisee, the self-righteous man, ignorant of himself, and empty of all love to God*."

2. *Is it a matter of any importance that the divisions should be alike in structure?* As in the case of the main proposition, there are three forms in which these subordinate propositions may appear: the declarative, the titular, and the interrogative. A single example will illustrate them all: Text, James v. 20; divisions, (1) The sinner is in error, (2) Whither does the way of error lead? (3) The great results of the sinner's conversion. Now we shall all probably agree that such a variety of forms in a series of divisions is undesirable. It tends to disturb rather than to steady the mind, whereas similarity of form is an aid to both the understanding and the memory.

A small matter, will you say? To be sure; and hence I have classed it as such. But even a fraction is not to be disregarded, as if it were convertible with zero. It is not the mark of a little mind to perceive the significance of little things and award them the rightful share of attention.

On the other hand, a series of divisions may fit together with too formal or pretty an exactness. Take the following as examples: "The Image and the Furnace" (Dan. iii. 11–17); (1) The tyrant's decree,—bow or burn; (2) The heroes' resolution,—burn, not bow; (3) The Lord's decision,—neither bow nor burn. "The Biography of a Worldly Young Man" (Luke xv. 11–17); (1) Gladness; (2) Badness; (3) Madness; (4) Sadness. These are exhaustive in their contents, and in form extremely neat and easily remembered, but suggestive of joiner-work rather than of efflorescence. Alliteration and rhyme are poetic devices.

3. *Shall there be distinctly marked subdivisions?* This depends on the number and the nature of the divisions. If there be only two, one or both may require subdivisions made sensible to the hearer. In Robertson's sermon, referred to a moment ago, four subdivisions of the causes of Elijah's despondency are given,—(1) Relaxation of physical strength; (2) Want of sympathy; (3) Want of occupation; (4) Disappointment in the expectation of success; and an equal number under his second main division. The twofold division was Robertson's almost invariable method, probably because, without the sacrifice of simplicity, it is favorable to elaboration.

Notice, however, that in the example just given, not only does the fewness of the divisions leave the way open for subdivisions, but the first division is of such a nature as to require them. That is to say, when we propose, as a division, *causes*, *reasons*, *classes*, and the like, we are called upon to enumerate, which is the same thing as formally to subdivide.

LECTURE XVII

THE AMPLIFICATION

THE plan of the sermon has now been gained, and is lying before the mind clear and distinct. Something more, we may hope; but this at least. What remains is to unfold the plan into the completed discourse.

Now these two processes—planning and composition—are not indeed radically unlike, but are different enough to make decidedly different demands upon the mental powers. The one is more logical, the other more imaginative; the one more analytic, the other more synthetic; the one more intellectual, the other more emotional. Composition is excursive. As compared with planning, it more freely follows the lead of merely suggested ideas, and thus sets in motion a fuller current of thought, and makes much larger use of language. Hence some minds devise plans with accuracy and ease, but develop them only through the most painstaking effort; while of other minds exactly the opposite is true. A clear thinker is not necessarily vivacious, impressionable, of nimble fancy, and always ready to speak his mind. Another man may talk with unbroken fluency, and not in an altogether inconsequent manner, on any topic that interests him, whereas close and consecutive thinking would be to him a sore drudgery, if not an impossibility.

The first thing, in evolving the sermon out of the plan, is to develop the line of thought in the divisions. How is this done?

I. **The Intellectual Acts.**

Of these the first to be considered is the *memory*. Most of the ideas that come into the mind, in the act of original composition, have been there before. They are not really newcomers, but old acquaintances returned.

The preacher must have abundant knowledge. He must not be a clerical "case-lawyer,"—reading and thinking almost solely with reference to the sermon he is making at any particular time. The sermon should not be seen to impoverish the preacher. In Greek the same word is used for *learned* and *eloquent* (Acts xviii. 24). Recently I heard a young man who probably did not know so much as the meaning of the word *homiletics* remark, and in no unkind spirit, concerning his present pastor and the one that had immediately preceded him, "Mr. A—— preaches as if he were using all he had been able to gather up; but Mr. B—— preached as if he had a great deal more than he was putting into the sermon." A rich and increasing store of knowledge is needful; but also the power readily to recall it,—to make it present again whenever needed. A tenacious memory, capable with due effort of reproducing knowledge, is what the scholar needs; but a ready memory, reproducing spontaneously its acquisitions, is the speaker's desideratum.

Then the *imagination* must do its part,—discerning analogies, looking beneath the surface of nature and human life, picturing the spiritual and the past, making new combinations of knowledge, lifting on high its ideals. The habitual state of every mind is a state of knowledge. Moreover, when meditating on some specific subject we find that ideas associated with that subject appear and multiply. What shall we do with them? Interpret them? Combine them in various relations with one another and thus make new truth appear? Every mind does this, more or less nobly and perfectly; and the power by which it is done is the creative imagination.

But *logical insight and direction* are also required. The

choice and arrangement of ideas must always be reasonable; sometimes it will be argumentative. Judgments will be formed, proofs put together, inferences drawn. Not only the imagination, then, but also the reasoning power—each in its own way—takes in hand the materials presented and elaborates them into new forms, disclosing new ideas and truths.

Then, again, there must be *verbal expression.* We are sometimes told that if we can but find ideas they will find their own words. And it may be true that what a man knows thoroughly he will be able somehow to tell. But "somehow" is an exceedingly wide term. There will be a notable difference in the telling in different cases, though the knowledge should be entirely the same. I had a man sawing wood for me, a few days ago, who can neither read, write, hear, nor speak; and even he seems usually able to express his ideas somehow. But it is painful to see him try, and hard to make out his meaning. Still more painful is it to see a speaker hesitating and striving for words, balked and embarrassed, and saying finally what neither he intends nor we understand. It may be for lack of something to say. The man was probably correct in his judgment who interrupted the ranting orator's exclamation, "O for words, words, words!" with the cruel remark, "You are mistaken; it is not words you are in need of, but ideas." Very true is it, "Of all defects of utterance, the most serious is having nothing to utter." But a man may have somewhat to say and not wherewithal to say it. What he needs is a vocabulary and the command of it. Suppose him to be, for example, a foreigner with an imperfect knowledge of English: you would know what advice to give him. The same advice would often be appropriate to an Englishman speaking English.

Now one may fall into the error of giving more attention to the language than to the thought,—reading the notes rather than feeling and giving out the music. This blunder is at least eighteen hundred years old. "The best words," says Quintilian, "generally attach themselves to our subject and show

themselves by their own light; but we set ourselves to seek for words as if they were hidden and trying to keep themselves from being discovered. We never consider that they are found close to the subject on which we are to speak, but look for them in strange places, and do violence to them when we have found them." The more effortless the finding of words, the better; therefore must we acquire an affluent vocabulary, and by practice have it at command.

II. **The Action of the Will.**

What can be done to set the intellect at work? What kind of exertion can we put forth to excite and direct these powers of memory, imagination, reasoning, and speech?

Let me note two things before offering a direct answer to the question:

(*a*) We should not have a bare plan to begin with. Have we not found that the invention of materials and the invention of divisions naturally go on together? Many are the ways in which sermons begin. Thomas Chalmers, while pastor at Kilmany, overtook in the public road a man striding lazily along, with his hands in his pockets. A few paces behind came his wife, wearily making her way, "a bairn in one hand and a bundle in the other,"—the man meanwhile rudely commanding her to "keep up." The young preacher went home and wrote his sermon on "Courteousness" (1 Pet. iii. 8). In a similar manner have thousands of sermons originated. One idea—a mere hint suggested by a text of Scripture, an incident, a casual remark—is enough. The mind is stimulated to activity; the single point of light expands. Other thoughts arise, an illustration is suggested, inferences are drawn: we have a group of ideas related, with various degrees of vitality, to some text or topic, and to one another. By this time, let us suppose, the line of thought, the plan, has become clearly defined. But here and there are also materials of development,—in some parts of the sermon enough to serve our purpose. So we have all these beforehand thoughts at the outset.

And (*b*) we shall have afterthoughts. The study-hour is ended; you have laid aside your unfinished sermon. You are making a pastoral visit, reading a book, conversing with a friend, enjoying rest or recreation. But the subject on which you were at work in the study is not wholly out of mind. Unconsciously it influences somewhat the drift of your thoughts. Now and then it comes up in consciousness, and appears perhaps in some new light. A difficulty over which you labored in vain is solved, a new train of thought is started, an illustrative example presents itself. And this without any effort of the will. It is reflex action: the mind goes back and dreams out that which it could not think out. In this way sometimes the best poetry arises, the best mechanical inventions, the best thoughts for preaching.

But the question remains, How shall we go to work directly upon the plan of a sermon, so as to develop it into a fuller presentation of the subject?

It must be always with an *uplifted heart*. I cannot conceive of a preacher of the Gospel preparing a sermon otherwise than prayerfully. We can make the truth of God our veritable possession, and gain the power of communicating it to others, only as the men of the Bible did. Through self-crucifixion, through open-heartedness toward God, on the still housetop of prayer, the Vision will be seen. God who bids us preach will give the Word, if we wait trustfully on Him. Not only the Word, but the words, the forms of thought and utterance, may be from Him. Through His blessing on our own efforts, however, not as a substitute for them. What, then, shall these efforts be?

The answer—as in the case of the invention of divisions—may be concentrated in the single word *attention*. Attend to what you are doing. Break the spell of reverie. Refuse to follow the lead of wandering thoughts. Get into full sympathy with the truth to be developed, and keep close to it in sympathy and love. Were you to ask the ablest preacher of your acquaintance what he did to develop a theme,—how he found

the ideas old and new in which it came forth so strong and complete to the congregation,—he would probably reply that the only effort he was conscious of was to keep this and that power of his mind in contact with it. Then the ideas seemed to come of themselves; not at once, perhaps, but sooner or later. It was like the multiplication of microscopic plants by "budding" or "division."

Attention is the energetic application of the mind to an object. Sometimes it is spontaneous. The mind is *drawn* to the object. One has but to yield and receive whatever may be given, somewhat as in the case just mentioned of reflex action. You may be merely browsing in a library, or apparently doing nothing at all, when some subject opens up and some of the best thoughts you have ever had take form and appear. But that which we need specially to consider is *voluntary* attention. This, it is evident, contains two elements, one from the intellect, and the other from the will. That which we apply to a subject of study is the intellect; but the applying of it is an act of the will, a voluntary putting forth of effort. And the act must be repeated over and over: it must be a persistent and protracted attention.

Apply your *memory* to a subject: your past knowledge of it and about it will come back. Apply the *imagination:* the subject takes new shapes, gives out new meanings, flashes some happy thought into the mind. Apply the *judgment:* ideas will combine or stand apart, according to their agreements or dissimilarities. Apply the *reasoning power:* reasons and inferences appear. Apply the *power of expression:* thoughts will find fitting forms of speech. How does all this come to pass in obedience to our will? Ask the metaphysicians—and find them as helpless before the mystery of it as other people. We have to do it without knowing how.

I have said nothing about *reading*, which in many instances of sermon-making, I suspect, constitutes no small part of the thinking.

Better than looking into books is meditation. Look into

your own soul; not so much into the intellect for ideas as into the heart for experiences. What has your inner life been? Tell it, and you will be describing the case of others. What do you know yourself to need? It is the need of those to whom you are preparing to minister. What is the voice of the Divine Spirit within? Put that voice into words. Richer in materials of preaching than you can yet be made to believe is the book of the soul.

But reading may be resorted to, either for intellectual and spiritual uplifting, or for information. The former of these two objects is undoubtedly approvable. Contact with another mind may greatly quicken one's own. Have we not an every-day illustration of it in conversation? More than once, in the midst of preparation to preach, I have *suffered* the visit of a friend, and on returning to my studies have had reason to thank him for the interruption. The intellect becomes sluggish and somber by being too much alone. A few minutes of good company will make it sweeter and brighter; and that of a favorite author is generally the most stimulating. It is certainly the most manageable.

But you must be honest with yourself. Do not lapse into reading as a relief from the effort to think, but take it up energetically as a help. Read creatively rather than receptively. Use your book as material of thought, not passively indulging yourself with it as an intellectual feather-bed.

With reference to reading for information, four cases may be briefly characterized:

(*a*) No reading whatever (always excepting the Scriptures, the *critical* commentary, and necessary books of reference). Ordinarily the best method.

(*b*) Reading after the sermon has been substantially prepared, in order to find, either directly or through suggestion, materials for strengthening its weak points. An unobjectionable method, and often expedient.

(*c*) Reading first. As soon as the selection of the theme

has been made, turning to written sources of information, gathering what we can, combining it with what we have of our own, and fusing all into one homogeneous discourse. An undesirable method,—apparently effective, but really repressive of personal power.

(*d*) Reading for appropriation, without assimilation. Making the sermon, or a large part of it, in a scrappy way, out of expositions, ideas, illustrations, expressions, furnished from the book-shelf. Such materials—to compare small things with great—are like the conquered provinces of a warlike empire, held together by the iron hand, not unified, not coherent. A totally wrong method, intellectually and morally,—fatal alike to self-respecting manliness and to strong, characteristic, earnest preaching.

One more suggestion. Indulge sparingly in quotation. Thought and feeling, like a transplanted tree, lose vitality in such transference. It may be well sometimes, in proof or illustration of what you have been saying, to quote testimony; or a striking quotation of a different character, if it be pertinent and brief, may be used effectively. One sentence is usually better than more. To make considerable extracts from other men's writings in a sermon (no matter what their intrinsic excellence) is to miss the true secret of power in oral discourse. Downright earnestness is embarrassed by them; oratory will have none of them. Such quotations may easily become too frequent in didactic treatises, like a text-book on systematic theology or homiletics; and much more are they intrusive and enfeebling in oratory, in talking to people, in preaching. Note the difference, in this respect, between Watson's "Theological Institutes" and his "Sermons." In the former, various authors are quoted, and frequently at great length; in the latter, almost none.

On this whole subject of homiletic reading and quotation the attitude of Wesley, as described in the preface to his "Sermons," will illustrate the true principle: "My design is

in some sense to forget all that I have read in my life. I mean to speak, in the general, as if I had never read one author, ancient or modern (always excepting the inspired). I am persuaded that, on the one hand, this may be a means of enabling me more clearly to express the sentiments of my heart, while I simply follow the chain of my own thoughts without entangling myself with those of other men; and that, on the other, I shall come with fewer weights on my mind, with less of prejudice and prepossession, to search for myself or to deliver to others the naked truths of the Gospel." With which *quotation* allow me to conclude my remarks on the subject.

III. The Materials.

Something more definite may be said as to attention,—this *stretching to* of our minds to a subject. We may apply the mind to one or another aspect of the subject, may take one or another line of treatment. This is true of the sermon as a whole, and it is equally true of any one of its leading ideas, or divisions.

Let us reduce the matter to its simplest form. Suppose you have a division to develop, and not a single pertinent thought rises into consciousness; so that you have been unable thus far to make a start. You are not helpless. There are at least certain pertinent questions that may be asked. They are questions as to the kinds of material needed in the purposed amplification; and the answer will depend on the nature of the subject, in connection with the specific object, of the sermon.

You may ask (*a*), "Will this proposition be clear to my hearers?" If not, it requires *explanation*. Perhaps the language needs to be explained,—by definition or paraphrase. Perhaps the idea needs to be made plainer,—by comparison with other ideas, by illustrative examples, and so on. It is not impossible that you will need to clarify your own knowledge of it, to explain it to yourself.

You may ask (*b*), "Are there those in my congregation who

will doubt this proposition, or, believing it, will need to have the conviction of its truth strengthened?" If so, an *argumentative* development may be called for. Where is your proof? Scripture, common experience, testimony, acknowledged principles, personal experience,—in some of these sources you may find reasons for your proposition; and this is the thing to be attended to now.

You may ask (*c*), "Can anything be done to make this subject real to those who shall hear me?" If it be susceptible of *description*, that may have the desired effect. A good *illustration* will perhaps serve the purpose better. You may recall some illustration once known; or something entirely new may be suggested, as you ask, "What is this like?" Or, failing in these efforts, you may turn to your homiletic note-book for the needed material.

The one work before you now is to picture the truth.

Still again, you may ask (*d*), "Shall I apply this subject practically? Shall I endeavor by *exhortation and practical inference* to lay it on the heart and conscience of the people?"

Here let us linger a moment. It is worth while to emphasize the invariable appropriateness of this last inquiry. Always must application and persuasion be kept in mind. Very significant was the artless comment made upon a preacher who had wedded to his strong thinking an equal applicatory habit: "Why, he doesn't seem one bit like a preacher; he just seems to be driving at *us* all the time." Often the discussion is too general. So much is said about sin, for example, that no time is left to speak of sins. Or some particular sin is indeed portrayed and denounced, elaborately, justly, eloquently perhaps, so that every hearer is ready to respond with an inward Amen; but no one is made to feel that thereby he is condemning himself. The various deceptive forms in which the sin appears are not pointed out. Its disguises are not torn off. The convicting truth is not so limited and specialized that the offender's eyes are opened to see and acknowledge

his guilt. In like manner, a spiritual experience or an attainment in Christian character is set forth, with due fullness of language and earnestness of manner; but not so as to constrain every willing soul to feel, "It is just what I need, and is within my reach; I may and must have this blessing."

It is said that one of Robert Hall's hearers remarked to another, after listening to a sermon on "The Sin and Absurdity of Covetousness": "An admirable sermon,—yet why should *such* a sermon be preached? For probably not one person in the congregation, though it is not wanting in examples of the vice in question, would take the discourse as at all applicable to himself." John Foster, who relates the incident, adds, with his keen critical insight, "A lecture on covetousness which should concentrate its whole rebuke on the love of money taken abstractedly might even do mischief; for every hearer who could say he did not *so* love money would confidently infer that therefore he was not guilty of covetousness."

Therefore, do not be so enamored of ideas and their unfolding as to forget what it is all for. Be always on the alert to develop your discussion along the line of its persuasive elements.

Now of course you will usually need more than one of these kinds of material in the development of your one division. The line of thought will change its direction at this and that point,—from explanation to proof, and so on.

Is the reminder also necessary, that no material should be used just because it is at hand? If explanation be not needed, let none be given. So with argument, and the rest. Here, perhaps, is the most common source of superficial and tiresome amplification. Things are said for which no excuse can be offered, except that it was possible and convenient to say them. A good bridge-builder will not attempt to utilize unnecessary or worthless material, laying a second floor when the first fully answered the purpose, or using wood where iron only is trustworthy. Is he under obligation to use up all his material in

the one structure? Or does the bridge have to be built, regardless of its character?

IV. **The Product.**

Such, then, are the materials to be sought for and used. And now one thing more: These materials being worked up into a development of the theme, what qualities shall this amplification have?

To say that it must be (1) *relevant* might seem like delivering the tritest of truisms. Nevertheless, irrelevance cannot be described as a rare fault, nor as one which every speaker is aware of and every hearer immediately detects. As in reasoning we have the familiar fallacy of "irrelevant conclusion," in which the debater loses sight of the precise point of the controversy, and as in sermon-making the proposition is not always pertinent to the text, nor the divisions to the proposition,—so does the amplification often go astray from its idea. The very best possible plan, like a sound tree preyed upon by parasites, may be made to sustain a good deal which in no proper sense of the word grows out of it.

If we follow too freely the lead of the mere casual associations of ideas rather than of their logical sequence, we are almost certain to say much that is not pertinent.

Another cause of irrelevance is the determination to introduce certain material for its supposed intrinsic value, without reference to the interrelations of thought. It seems too good to be omitted,—that striking historic fact, that fresh and sparkling truth, that original illustration,—and so we find or make a place for it, though its suitability lie open to serious doubt. It must produce a strong impression, we fancy, no matter when or where it may appear.

Still another cause is the necessity of saying something when nothing pertinent seems available. It may perhaps be said of this necessity that it knows no law. But the competent preacher, in all ordinary circumstances, can, if he will, find material enough for the fitting development of his points of discourse.

The amplification should be (2) *continuous.* Here the formal sermonizer is often at fault. His procedure is mechanical. First he must have his plan. Then, taking up the divisions one by one, he gives a treatment of each, without the free and repeated movement of his mind through the whole subject. His divisions are literally *divisions.* The sermon is a series of separate little discourses,—each successive part not growing naturally out of the preceding, no one life-current flowing through them all.

True, there will be transitions, very many, even in the strong and continuous movement of interblended thought, feeling, and purpose that constitutes the true sermon. But they will be, as in nature, easy and gradual, not abrupt, not a jumping off one train of cars and taking another.

Remember, too, that it is one thing to move freely and unbrokenly through a subject yourself, and quite a different matter so to express it to your hearers that they may be able to do the same. You may leave out too many of the minor and intermediate ideas,—forgetting that your own mind passed from *a* to *c* by the help of *b*, and that your hearers are likely to need the same help. Or you may introduce the successive ideas of the discourse unskilfully. The conclusion of a syllogism might be written down after the premises, without any connective word; but the result would be either an obscurity or an unpleasant little hiatus of thought. Hence the "therefore." So we cannot ordinarily omit the "ands," "fors," "althoughs," "notwithstandings," "therefores," etc., from the expression of continuous thought. Try it on the first piece of composition that comes to hand, and note the result. Only under strong emotional excitement, when speech tends to break up into exclamations and short, sharp imperatives, can this be done. And of special importance is it that the successive constituent parts of the sermon be clearly connected by the appropriate words and phrases.

I am not unaware that continuity may degenerate into

prolixity. Nothing concise or suggestive in the style, nothing left to the hearer's imagination; somewhat as if a man should indulge in the insufferable tediousness of talking in syllogisms instead of, like everybody else, in enthymemes. But it need not be so; and we should have to search long and far to find any excellence that does not show some near-by road to error and failure.

The amplification should (3) observe *the oratorical order.* What was said on this principle considered as a requirement of divisions, is equally apposite here, and need not be repeated.

I will only remind you of how much the force and effectiveness of any thought, great or small, in the discourse, may depend on its location. Take the strongest sermon you know, and transpose introduction and conclusion — or, indeed, any two sentences! Nor is it more than a lazy conceit that, the amplification being a comparatively simple affair, its materials will naturally fall into the right order. They will do so exactly in proportion as the mind acts naturally, — that is to say, in proportion as it acts in accordance with the laws of thought and persuasive speech. But while making its wide exploration and gathering in its materials, the mind will not always lay down these gathered treasures in the right order. Hence the need of looking through them and using our judgment as to the best oratorical arrangement.

The amplification should be (4) *adequate.* We have all heard sermons that were little better than outlines, — only a feeble, repetitious unfolding of the theme. On the other hand, there are preachers, though not so many as formerly, who seem loth to drop a truth so long as one additional word of explanation, proof, or illustration may be given. Midway between this deficiency and this excess is the adequacy at which we are to aim.

Judge for yourself on what points a very few remarks will suffice, and what should be treated with greater thoroughness.

And this suggests the last quality of the amplification that we shall note:

It must be (5) *proportionate*. The thoughts most vitally related to the purpose of the sermon obviously demand a stronger treatment than those of less significance. For example, suppose your proposition should be, "It is through the Word of God that Men are Sanctified to His service" (John xvii. 17); and that you should employ four fifths of the discussion with showing what is meant by the Word of God and setting forth its general value and importance, leaving only the remaining fifth for that which is the very gist of the subject,—which is indeed the assertion itself,—the sanctifying power of the Word of God: in such a case the emphasis would be so badly misplaced that you could scarcely be said to have discussed the proposition at all.

In Dr. Chalmers's sermon on "The Paternal Character of God" (Matt. vii. 11) three fourths of the amplification is given to the *depravity of human nature* ("ye being evil"); after which the author remarks: "We have left ourselves but little room for that which is nevertheless the main lesson of our text,—a lesson of confidence in the liberality and good will of our Father in heaven." But why not go back and replan the discourse so as to *make* room for the truth which the text is so evidently intended to teach?

Take another example, quoted from a newspaper: "I heard a sermon on the text, 'Where sin abounded, grace did much more abound'; and the comment of many hearers was that the preacher spent so much time in showing how sin abounded, and made such a strong presentation of that part of the text, that there was very little room left in which to show how grace did much more abound; that truth was very feebly presented, and the impression left by the sermon was exactly the reverse of the truth taught by the text, namely, that, though grace somewhat abounded, sin did much more abound."

Which is the paramount purpose of the preacher in such cases,—to present his subject, or to present some other subject, or to get through with his sermon?

LECTURE XVIII

THE INTRODUCTION

IF any part of the sermon may be expected to come of itself, it is the introduction. Certainly the preacher who habitually finds it hard to introduce his proposition may suspect that he has fallen into the habit of going about his task in some wrong way. Fix your attention on the main ideas of the subject; form the plan; trace out the amplification; expand, condense, elaborate; and if any word of introduction be necessary, it will probably, by this time, have been suggested. If not, look for it. But this may be regarded as an exceptional case. Especially do not suppose that because in the completed discourse the introduction is first, the order of composition must be the same.

Indeed, if the teachings of the classic rhetoricians as to the objects of this part of an oration be taken as applicable to the sermon, we shall often feel no need of any introduction at all. "The Greeks," says Cicero in "De Oratore," "bid us adopt such an exordium as to make the hearers favorable to us, willing to be informed, and attentive." Quintilian gives the same analysis of the orator's objects in the introduction. And this doctrine is quoted with approval by some of the best homiletic writers of our day. Dr. Phelps tells us that he cannot improve this statement,—that "seldom can any one improve a rhetorical statement by Cicero." But so far as the rhetoric of preaching is concerned, this statement of "that rarest com-

bination of rhetorical powers, a prince of orators and a prince of critics," seems to be by no means too good for improvement. Would Cicero have made it, I wonder, if he had had in mind (what he could not have entertained even a rudimentary conception of) the Christian pulpit? Think of the significant differences between a speech in the Roman forum and a speech in the Christian congregation. Given such a character and such an audience as those of the average political orator, in ancient or modern times, and it may well be recommended that, before entering on the discussion of his theme, the speaker shall occupy some time in an attempt to gain the favor of his hearers, to remove their prejudices against the cause he is about to advocate, and to arouse attention.

But very different is the case of the preacher in the ordinary circumstances of the Christian ministry. He may assume the audience to be well-disposed toward himself, and both teachable and attentive with respect to what he may have to deliver. Not perfectly so, of course; but sufficiently for rendering it needless, if not obtrusive, to devote one constituent part of the discourse to the purpose of wakening these dispositions in them.

Not only is the attitude of the Christian congregation toward the speaker and his theme notably different from that of the political gathering; but in the congregation the preaching is not the first thing that claims attention. First there is worship. And this would seem to be the best possible preparation for the preaching. On what may we depend more confidently than on common prayer and praise to diffuse the same feeling throughout the assembly, in pulpit and pew, and thus to dispose the minds of all to "receive with meekness the ingrafted word"? The reading of the Scriptures and the announcement of the text will have somewhat of the same effect. Even the undevout will feel the sacred influence of the occasion, and may be better prepared to hear the Word of God than any introductory address could

have prepared them. A contemporary newspaper account of John Summerfield's preaching in the city of Baltimore mentions, as one illustration of his wonderful attractiveness, "the deferent and solemn manner in which he led the congregation in worship"; and it is added, "Above all, the chaste and fervent simplicity of his petition to the Eternal swept away all prejudice, and opened every heart and every eye to the truth and beauty of holiness."

But, although the "*reddere auditores benevolos, attentos, dociles*" deserves no prominent place, as a rule, in homiletics, yet the sermon, in fulfilling its plan, is likely to put forth an introduction. What, then, are some of the things to be noted in this form of development?

I. **Its Objects.**

Examine any hundred sermons representing a variety of authors and occasions; and you will probably find that four fifths of them begin with explanatory matter. For example, a very common sort of introduction is an account of the circumstances under which the text was written; or, in the case of a historical text, the story of which it forms a part. What is this but a partial exposition of the passage? Often, indeed, the introduction is strictly exegetical,—an interpretation of the words of the text preparatory to the statement of the theme. It is the process by which the proposition is brought out, the blow that cracks the nut. Or the introduction may consist of some principle or fact that throws light on the theme, making it distinctly visible as soon as set forth. Indeed, if you will take the pains to mark the various kinds of introductory material to which I shall call your attention in a few minutes, you will find them nearly all to be explanatory.

Clearly, then, whatever may be said of other public addresses, the chief and characteristic object of the introduction of the sermon is to show the subject to the hearer, at the very outset, in the same light in which it appears to the speaker. In a word, it is *explanation*.

But there are also subordinate objects. And here we cannot do better than to follow the suggestions of the classic doctrine.

The first of these subordinate objects is to gain the *good-will* of the hearer. Suppose the preacher to be an apostle proclaiming the Cross of Christ in strange cities before pagans, and in the synagogue of unbelieving Jews. Suppose him to be a street-preacher or a foreign missionary of the present day. Or suppose him to be simply a stranger to the congregation before which he is standing. In such circumstances it may well be worth his while to begin with an *introduction of himself.* If there be any word that he can say to shake off the indifference or counteract the antagonism with which he is regarded, let him say it. Skilfully must it be done, as well as modestly and candidly; but that which prompts the effort is the true orator's instinct. The opening words of the apostle Peter's sermon at Pentecost repelled the charge of drunkenness that had been brought against him and his fellow-disciples,—"These are not drunken, as ye suppose,"—and were thus fitted to gain the good-will of the audience.

Another of these objects is to *interest* the hearer and thus stimulate his attention. It must be confessed, there is no little dull preaching, and of dull hearing fully as much. One of Van Oosterzee's points of inquiry, in his "Practical Theology," is, "Whence is it that so many sermons are so indescribably wearisome, even for those who are not wanting in earnestness and the gift of appreciation?" The answer is twofold, in the preacher and in the hearer. Even the somewhat "earnest and appreciative" hearer is often in a submissive and non-expectant rather than in an eager state of mind. If the preacher can succeed, at the start, in quickening him into real and interested attention, it will bring him at once into vital contact with the subject of discussion. Certain classes of hearers especially need to be borne in mind: such as children, many of whom are present of necessity, not from choice; young

people, full of self-consciousness and the consciousness of one another; old habitual church-goers inclined to be formal and slumberous; worldly-minded men and women unfamiliar with Christian ideas and experiences. It is possible and certainly desirable, at the beginning, to incite all such persons to attentiveness.

But we must also bear in mind that to awaken interest is not to sustain it, to gain attention is not to hold it fast and make it absorbing. Many a preacher is listened to with more interest the first five minutes than during any subsequent five minutes of his sermon.

Still another subordinate object of the introduction is to make the congregation *teachable*. Sometimes there is prejudice against the truth about to be delivered. Sinful minds are intellectually and morally preoccupied against the law of God. Most of this prejudice we have to find and meet, as best we may, outside our church walls; but some of it is willing to come within, though knowing that it is liable to be plainly spoken to without the privilege of reply. Shall we make a wise and reasonable use of our advantage, or carelessly throw it away? Or, still worse, turn it into a disadvantage, and rivet the bolts that fasten the entrance-ways of those minds against us? We propose to preach on the subject of the spirituality of the law, or divine retribution, or the forgiveness of injuries, or worldliness, or the sale and use of intoxicating liquors, or some other doctrine, duty, or sin, the announcement of which will be provocative of opposition in certain minds. Surely whatever we can do to lessen this prejudice, before entering upon the discussion of the subject, will be a decided initial gain.

Suppose, now, that such objects as I have mentioned do not need to be sought; or suppose that they may be gained without devoting any specific part of the sermon to them: in this case we have only to begin without an introduction. To employ one would be formalism, a waste of time and oppor-

tunity. I have heard a lecturer on homiletics say that he once asked his wife, an unusually intelligent and appreciative hearer of preaching, "What shall I tell my class this morning on the subject of the introduction?" "Tell them for me," she answered, "that the best way to introduce a sermon is to have no introduction." It was not by any means an idle or meaningless paradox. It reminds me of another which I have seen in a newspaper: "To begin at the beginning in writing a book or an editorial or a letter, in a conversation, a personal appeal, a Sunday-school lesson, a public address, or a sermon, is almost always a mistake." Abruptness, indeed, is not to be coveted. Certainly it is not to be *affected*. The preacher must not seem to be priding himself on his concise and businesslike style. Let him speak with the characteristic deference and gentleness of the orator; but sometimes with very little introduction or none at all.

II. **Its Relation to the Subject.**

It follows from the foregoing argument that the introduction is not, as has been said of it, "a discourse before the principal discourse," "drawn from an idea which immediately touches the subject without forming part of it"; but a genuine development of the subject in the direction of the mental state of the audience. Its relation to the body of the discourse is much more intimate than that of a preface to a book: the interplay of thought is unbroken. Even Cicero has said: "Nor is the exordium of a speech to be sought for from without, or from anything unconnected with the subject, but to be derived from the very essence of the cause. . . . Thus our exordia will give additional weight, when they are drawn from the most intimate parts of our defense; and it will be shown that they are not only not common, and cannot be transferred to other causes, but that they have wholly grown out of the cause under consideration." A well-qualified architect does not like to *tack on* a porch to a house; the porch, in his plan, appears as a part of the house itself,—naturally grow-

ing out of the main building. Similar, in sermon structure, is the relation of the introduction to the main body of discourse.

The oneness of the introduction with the rest of the discourse is also suggested when we consider its location. True, it usually comes first of all, before even the announcement of the subject. But not always. Often it may with equal appropriateness follow the proposition; and sometimes this arrangement is decidedly the more striking and forcible. Monod, e.g., in his sermon on "Are You a Christian?" (2 Cor. xiii. 5), begins with an interrogative statement of his theme: "Are you in the faith? Such is the question which I come to examine with you. Enter on this examination each for himself, and as if he were the only person in the world." Then the importance of this inquiry and its pertinence to the congregation are shown,—an introduction as truly vital to the subject as is the discussion itself.

Now the *introduction of the speaker*, being personal to himself, is indeed without organic relation to the discourse that follows, and may be used with equal propriety (or impropriety) in connection with any discourse. But not so the introduction of the sermon. This, as we have seen, is for the most part explanatory; and explanation (*ex-planare*, spreading out), whether it come before or after the announcement of the theme, is development.

In like manner, thoughts employed for the purpose of interesting hearers in the subject, or of removing prejudice, will be most successful when they do not simply suggest the subject, touching it here and there, but come forth from it as a vital outgrowth. To a superficial glance the difference between the introduction of Paul's address at Athens, and his theme, is very great indeed,—the idolatry of the Athenians, "Jesus and the Resurrection." Yet it requires little consideration to show that we have here indicated, not the subject-matter of two discourses, one preliminary to the other; but a vital unity

III. **Its Qualities.**

What are the qualities in an introduction, through which its objects may be best attained? It should be:

1. *Specific.* As explanatory, it must indeed be often more general than the theme. The first thing to be done, in studying an object, is to locate it,—to take a general survey of the field and see where the object stands with reference to its surroundings. So the introduction to a subject of discourse will, in many instances, give a view of the connections of the text, or of some general principle in which the subject is included. But it may easily become too general and thus lose force and significance. A popular lecture on the necessity for some sanitary measure—say the draining of a town—might appropriately begin with a few words on the more easily recognized relations of man to his physical environment, but hardly with a definition of life, or a demonstration of the theory of chemical affinity. I once heard a sermon which began as follows: "God exists. His Word and His works prove it. But man also exists," and so on. Where shall we find a subject that could not be brought under some such first principle of natural theology as the divine existence?

In exegetical introductions it is a happy art to put the exposition, at a single stroke, into contact with the text. It may be, some simple question will be used to bring the two together. Or perhaps the exposition will follow the text so closely and inevitably as to seem almost like a continuation of it. Many admirable examples may be found in the homilies of Chrysostom,—such as the following:

"'*Then Herod, when he saw that he was mocked of the wise men, was exceeding wroth*' (Matt. ii. 16). Yet surely it was a case, not for anger, but for fear and awe: he ought to have perceived that he was attempting impossible things. But he was not refrained. . . ."

"'*Then cometh Jesus from Galilee to Jordan*' (Matt. iii. 13). With the servants the Lord, with the criminals the Judge,

cometh to be baptized. But be not thou troubled, for in these humiliations His exaltation doth most shine forth. . . ."

"'*Think not that I am come to destroy the law, or the prophets*' (Matt. v. 17). Why, who suspected this, or who accused Him, that He should make a defense against this charge? Since surely from what had gone before no such suspicion was generated. For to command men to be meek, and gentle, and merciful, and pure in heart, and to strive for righteousness, indicated no such design, but rather altogether the contrary.

"Wherefore, then, can He have said this? Not at random, nor vainly: but inasmuch as He was proceeding to ordain commandments greater than those of old, saying . . ."

"'*Then came to Jesus scribes and Pharisees, which were of Jerusalem, saying, Why do Thy disciples transgress the tradition of the elders*,' etc. (Matt. xv. 1–6). *Then*—when? When He had wrought His countless miracles; when He had healed the infirm by the touch of His garment. For even with this intent doth the evangelist mark the time, that he might signify their unspeakable wickedness, by nothing repressed."

The introduction should not be what a certain generation of scholastic preachers liked to call it, a *præ-ambulam*,—a walking hither and thither *before* the subject. It is rather an *ad-ambulam*,—a going *to* it.

2. *Distinct in its contents from all that follows.* Otherwise it is not preparatory to the body of the discourse, but a part of it, and with the disadvantage of appearing out of due time. Then, on the second appearance, it seems to the hearer to be reached (as in fact it is) by some circular movement of the preacher's mind, which promises poorly for the progress of thought. And yet this is no infrequent fault of unpractised sermonizers. A clear idea of the design of the introduction, a firm grasp of the whole sermon held together before the mind in the unity of its successive parts, and the determination to advance steadily toward a definite end, are the preventives.

While distinct from the body of the sermon, it is a fine quality of an introduction to excite expectation and give hints of an interesting discussion. But the promise must be fulfilled.

Better not awaken an expectation that is to be disappointed. Of Frederick Robertson's introductions it has been said: "The attention of the audience is immediately fastened upon a fresh train of thought, though simply expressed; the door is thrown open to something new and powerfully attractive; the mind is delighted with the prospect of obtaining new ideas on familiar but eternal truth, and of being led into a fresh field of instruction." It need hardly be said that Robertson kept his promises.

3. *Easily intelligible.* Evidently so, if the object of the introduction is to make the subject intelligible. An explanation that needs itself to be explained must prove a failure. And yet there are such.

4. *Varied* as to its contents in different cases. In no part of the sermon will you be more apt to show that sure sign of the lack of life, sameness, than at its beginning. Most of the sermons that have been put in my hands for criticism begin with some account of the author of the text, the circumstances in which it was written, the people to whom it was first addressed, or, when historical, the occurrences with which it stands connected. These in many instances are pertinent introductions, but so common as to make two questions equally pertinent: Is there anything picturesque or suggestive in my way of telling the story? and, What proportion of my introductions have any other kind of contents?

Think of the various kinds of material that are available for your purpose: (1) exegesis of the text; (2) exegesis of the context; (3) personal observation and experience; (4) some general principle under which the subject is included; (5) a series of truths or facts opening the way to the subject; (6) similarity to some other truth; (7) contrast with opposite error; (8) argument from the less to the greater; (9) harmony of the subject with common belief and experience; (10) commendation of the subject; (11) suggestions of the occasion (12) illustrative examples,—and others. Remember, too, the

combinations of different materials that can be, and are, constantly made. No need of a tiresome monotony in the manner of introducing our subjects.

I will resist the inclination to illustrate with examples, and shall hope for something better,—that you will do it for yourselves. Any volume of sermons on which you may lay your hand will serve the purpose.

5. *Proportionate* with respect to the rest of the sermon. Practically this means *brevity*. For we need but to consider the object of this part of the discourse, together with the object of the amplification and of the conclusion, to be convinced that the tendency of introductions is to become disproportionately long. Dr. Joseph Parker's criticism on the sermons given him for examination by a company of young preachers, was that they were "equal to the best he had seen," but "in every case the introduction was too long,"—"a beautiful carriage-drive, with only a cottage at the end of it." But of how large a class were they fairly representative! The earnest preacher, pressed for time in the midst of his sermon or in making the closing application, seems slow to learn what many an inconspicuous hearer might tell him,—that the subordinate function of merely introducing his subject had received far more than its rightful share of attention.

I do not have to search far into my own stock of manuscripts to find an example. Here is a sermon on the text, "The Spirit also helpeth our infirmities" (Rom. viii. 26), of which the introductory matter may be indicated in brief as follows: "Mere power is not attractive. Nor is there any necessary connection between power and goodness. But when we see a union of power and goodness, there is something not only to command our admiration, but to touch our hearts. And, in truth, we see in this an image of the Divine Nature. In the text both the power and the goodness of God are set forth." Then follows a special explanation of two words of the text, "helpeth" and "infirmities." Now here is an intro-

duction consisting, first, of general principles of truth, and, secondly, of exegesis. So far as I can see, none of it is inappropriate to the theme; but, as elaborated and illustrated in this manuscript, it comprises three eighths of the sermon. Think of a day that should require four hours and a half for dawning!

It is sometimes said in reply to such criticisms as these: "I have tried to abridge my introductions, and cannot; it is impossible to do them justice in less time." But how about all the rest of the sermon? Have you ample time left for that? If not, you are practising bad economy,—weakening the heart in order to strengthen a limb. Moreover, all that is necessary to the abridgment of your introductions is probably the nerve to do it. You have what seems to you—and perhaps is—a well-connected chain of preliminary thought, and are loth to break it. But to act on such a principle in the amplification would often make your sermons comparable in length to those of the most tireless Puritan preacher of the olden time. Suppose "justice" to your introduction should demand half an hour. As a matter of fact, have you not a somewhat indefinite time limit in mind, beyond which you do not purpose to allow the introduction to pass? Your simple duty is to reduce the limit.

The introduction is not the place for a full and complete explanation. It is not the place for elaboration. It is not the place for the details of a narrative. Leave all these out, take a brief line of thought briefly expressed, and your mental movement will be firmer, more direct, more quickening to your audience. A vigorous brevity,—that is the desideratum; a steady and soldier-like tread, not the circling and hiding of a band of wild Indians.

Wesley's introductions are models of simplicity and brevity. Their author evidently had but one object,—to bring his hearers into effective contact with the subject as soon as possible. Sometimes, indeed, his introductory words are extremely few,

or even none at all. In his sermon, for example, on "The Way to the Kingdom" (Mark i. 15) he begins with the announcement of his divisions: "These words naturally lead us to consider, first," etc. Note also the sermons on "Free Grace," "What is Man?"—and others.

The introduction may be expanded into exorbitant proportions through fear of otherwise not finding enough material to make out the sermon. Here is a common fault of timid or unpractised sermonizers, though it is by no means confined to them. The sermon-writer feels, perhaps, that a hard piece of work is before him; he is quite sure that as yet he has not ideas enough; but his introductory thoughts develop encouragingly, and the temptation is to let them contribute too largely to the substance of the discourse. I once heard a sermon on the text, "As Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness," etc. (John iii. 14), in which the preacher began with the creation, and gave a sketch of the principal events of Bible history from that time to the appearance of the fiery serpents in the wilderness. As he afterward informed me, it was only his third attempt at preaching; but I hope you will never lead your congregation over so long and needless a pathway—even though it should be your *first*.

LECTURE XIX

THE CONCLUSION

IF preaching is persuasion, there can be little danger of overestimating the conclusion of the sermon; for it is here that all the persuasive forces culminate. The conclusion is the supreme, concentrated effort to gain the hearer's will. A poem or a story ought to end well; not abruptly or feebly, but in such a manner as to give unity and finish and to leave an agreeable impression on the mind. More important is it that the sermon shall end well. But this means, not that abruptness should be avoided, nor that the boldest and most striking thoughts should be reserved for the close; but that the preaching shall conclude with an effective application. The introduction is the skirmish which brings on the battle; the conclûsion is the final assault, hand to hand, which determines the issue.

I. **Its Necessity and its Difficulty.**

During the whole progress of the sermon there is going forth an influence upon the will of the hearer. At any rate, it should be so. For persuasion may be pervasive rather than explicit, indirect rather than direct. The very first sentence may touch some sleepy motive and at least disturb its dreams. The text simply as announced may go straight to the conscience. The hearer in such a case makes the application for himself. But in the conclusion this application is made by the preacher, immediately and with all the gathered momentum of the preceding discourse.

For, while this or that hearer, already awakened and sensitive, may apply the truth faithfully to his own case, people generally cannot be trusted to do so. Simon the Pharisee could not. And accordingly our Lord not only related the parable of the lender and his two debtors, but held forth its meaning, like a flame of fire, close to the conscience of this interested formalist whose guest He was: "*Thou* gavest Me no water. . . . *Thou* gavest Me no kiss. . . . My head with oil *thou* didst not anoint. . . . Her sins, which are many, are forgiven; for she loved much: but to whom little is forgiven, the same loveth little" (Luke vii. 44–47). So, likewise, it was when the apostle Peter said, "Let all the house of Israel therefore know assuredly, that God hath made Him both Lord and Christ, this Jesus *whom ye crucified*,"—"when they heard *this*, they were pricked in their heart, and said unto Peter and the rest of the apostles, Brethren, what shall we do?" (Acts ii. 36, 37).

Would it not be better, however, that people should make their own application of the truth? Undoubtedly; and, likewise, it would be better that they should not need to be preached to at all. But neither of these two preferable things is a fact. Men, being such as they are, need preaching; and for the same reason, applicatory preaching. The time will come when no man will have to say to his neighbor, "Know thou the Lord"; for all shall know Him, and His law shall be in every heart. But that millennial day is not now.

People may listen with pleasure to a discussion, may feel some interest in the theory of religion; but to lay bare their own consciences to the obligations that Christianity reveals is what they are commonly averse to. To do this for them is the consummation of preaching. "I have now made this subject as plain as I can; I can do no more; I leave it with you": so the preacher sometimes informs his congregation. But in so doing he betrays a misconception of his office. All along with his teaching, and preëminently at its close, there

should be urgency, entreaty, command, exhortation, persuasion to *do* the truth. "Preach the Word; be instant in season, out of season; reprove, rebuke, *exhort*, with all long-suffering and *teaching*." Dr. Storrs tells of a fellow-student of his in the seminary who said: "I like to discuss subjects; but I never know what to do with them after they are discussed. I can only leave them and go along." This may be good theological lecturing; but is it preaching? It might be so regarded, if the ethical doctrine of Socrates were true,—that virtue is knowledge, and accordingly a man who clearly sees what right conduct is will be sure to practise it. But the fearful moral inertia and the evil passions of the heart are constantly impelling men, even in the clearest light of truth, to do wrong.

> "Oft have I lain awake at night and thought
> Whence came the evils of this mortal life;
> And my creed is that not through lack of wit
> Men go astray, for most of them have sense
> Sufficient, but that we must look elsewhere.
> Discourse of reason tells us what is right,
> But we fall short in action."

Not only when we see the good, but even when we would do it, evil is present with us. That is human experience and New Testament doctrine. The preacher, though his teachings were absolutely perfect, must be more than a teacher. He can be satisfied with nothing short of persuasion. Sometimes he calls upon men to respond openly and immediately, at the close of the sermon, to his appeals,—to commit themselves to the Christian life then and there. And always this urgency to immediate action is the true spirit of preaching.

We may not find it an easy matter to instruct and convince men; but we shall find it harder to persuade them. A few days ago I asked one of our students to join a Sunday-school class. He was unwilling to promise. "Attend the school for six weeks," said I; "and then, if you see any good reason for

quitting, do so." "There is no good reason now," he promptly replied, "why I should not attend; I know I ought to do it." Such every-day incidents are as significant as they are familiar.

Unhappily the conclusion is precisely that part of the sermon which is in most danger of being neglected in the process of composition. Not in the delivery. Here, no doubt, the preacher does his best. But in many cases it is too late to do well,—no adequate preparation having been made. To open out the meaning of the text has interested him; reasoning and illustration have kept his mind in a state of pleasurable vivacity; and now that all this is over, and the amplification completed, he is intellectually satisfied, and thinks only of quitting.

Or perhaps Vinet has disclosed the secret of failure in many instances: "We are embarrassed at the end, since, on the one hand, it seems that we have said everything, and find ourselves, so to speak, in the presence of nothing, while, on the other hand, we feel the necessity of saying something more. We are fatigued, exhausted; we dread a new effort, and we despatch the peroration with some commonplace exhortation or wish, with exclamations, with passages of Scripture negligently introduced."

Or it may be that, hoping for a better emotive condition in the pulpit, we trust to that for the conclusion. The heightened glow of feeling, we think, will not only quicken the power of utterance, but also suggest the appropriate thoughts. But such a method is of very uncertain value. Walking to church one evening with a preacher of extraordinary ability, I heard from him the outline of the sermon he was about to deliver. The conclusion was lacking. "I will leave that," he said, "to be suggested at the time." I was struck with admiration of his genius. "This man's mind," I thought, "energizing through the discussion, will strike out a conclusion stronger, more impassioned, more impressive, than any that could be outlined beforehand." The result may have been exceptional; it certainly was disappointing. Having developed the plan

with his usual analytic vigor and ready, sympathetic utterance, the preacher made a few ineffectual attempts to apply the subject, and took his seat. No real and effective conclusion was "suggested at the time." I do not believe it was an exceptional instance. I believe it illustrates what would prove to be the rule in the case not only of the generality of preachers, but even of the most highly gifted.

Had I occasion to revise all my old sermons I should wish to give attention chiefly to their conclusions. Here the defects seem to be gravest, the missed opportunities most numerous. And I have almost always found the sermons handed me for criticism to be similarly defective.

Now if in the act of delivering the sermon a more forcible conclusion than the one prepared be suggested, make use of it unhesitatingly. Hold yourself free to modify, or even to dismiss altogether, what you have already in hand. But *have a conclusion;* and let it be premeditated. It should be the freest part of the whole sermon; but for this very reason it must be carefully prepared.

II. **Its Relation to the Whole Application.**

All application is not reserved for the conclusion of the discourse. Anywhere in the sermon, all through, there may be applicatory remarks.

Accordingly, taking location as our principle of division, we may distinguish several varieties of application:

1. When it is simply *distributed* more or less uniformly throughout the sermon. We frequently find it so in expository discourses. Not always; for a purely expository discussion may be followed by inferences from the whole subject. See, e.g., the conclusion of Wesley's sermon on "Temptation" (1 Cor. x. 13): "This whole passage is fruitful of instruction. Some of the lessons which we may learn from it are, first,"—and so on. On the other hand, topical and textual sermons sometimes employ only the distributed, or continuous, application.

Read the addresses of D. L. Moody. They are so astir with personal appeal from beginning to end that we can hardly say there is more of it in one part of the discourse than in another. "Am I in communion with my Creator or out of communion?"—"Do not think I am preaching to your neighbors, but remember I am trying to speak to you, to every one of you, as if you were alone"—"And can you give a reason for the hope that is in you?"—"Father, you have been a professed Christian for forty years; where are your children to-night?"—"O prodigal, you may be wandering on the dark mountains of sin, but God wants you to come home"—"Oh, may God bring you to that decision,"—such are the keen moral search-lights that flash out all along from introduction to conclusion. Brief statements of doctrine, Scripture expositions (always purposeful, though not always correct), lifelike description, numerous pertinent illustrations, and *continuous application*, are the materials of these revival talks that have been so greatly blessed in turning men to God.

A young man preached one Sunday morning in a London church, taking as his theme "The Great Day of Atonement" (Lev. xvi. 34); and thirty years afterward one of his hearers wrote:

"I distinctly remember carrying away the inerasable impression of power that could not be explained and refused to be measured, power shown in lucid statement, vivid picturing, pungent appeal, and red-hot earnestness. . . . The Levitical sacrifices were as real as though offered but yesterday, and their meaning as clear and indisputable as the shining of the August sun; and yet the center of interest is not in the Jewish offerings, but in the needs of the soul, and besides them the preacher sees nothing except Christ as God's sure remedy for sin. Not for a moment does he lose the gripe of his hearer. He is not so carried away by interest in his theme in any of its aspects as to forget the listening soul and the present God. He keeps touch with his audience. Every paragraph ends

with a clause which says, 'He means me,' 'He is appealing to me,' 'He is praying for me.'"

The young preacher was Charles H. Spurgeon; and to the day of his death he continued to preach as he preached that morning. Read his sermons, and say whether they would have been improved, especially as spoken sermons, by omitting every "pungent appeal" except such as appear in the conclusion.

The application in the homilies of Chrysostom illustrates this same spirit of insistent and irrepressible appeal. This great preacher—surpassed by none since his day—applies the Word as he expounds it all through the discourse. But not only so. His impassioned earnestness increases as he goes on; so that his last exposition is almost always followed by an application both more extensive and more intensive than any that have gone before. It would seem as if his soul has now become so inflamed with holy zeal to send the truth home to men's hearts that he can give no more exegesis, but must spend the whole remaining time in exhortation. It may be some sin that he is exposing,—theater-going, drunkenness, covetousness, an unforgiving spirit; or some Christian grace that he is commending,—kindness to the poor, Christian communion in the house of God, family religion; whatever it may be, he is determined that this last truth at least shall make its due impression on the hearts and consciences of the people.

In many cases, indeed, if the application of a truth be not made during the course of discussion, it will not be made at all. No place will be found for it in the conclusion.

Besides, it is worth noting that the movement of feeling, when kept within proper limits, will react favorably upon thought. So the applicatory appeal, stirring the heart, will also stimulate the intellect of the hearer. It will make him more attentive and thoughtful. He is more susceptible to the ideas of the sermon for being made to feel their practical force.

2. When it is all *reserved for the conclusion.* In this case the application bears a general relation to the whole preceding discourse. It is the theme itself, as set forth in the divisions and their amplification, that is applied. Take, as an example, Dr. Deems's sermon entitled "The Sign of Jonas" (Matt. xii. 39). Here the body of the discourse is an argument in proof of the resurrection of Christ; and the application consists of the concluding inference that, if we fail to believe in the risen Redeemer, we shall be condemned before Him. Again, in his sermon on "The Seen and the Unseen" (2 Cor. iv. 17, 18), Dr. Deems applies an explanatory discourse after a similar manner,—as follows: divisions, (1) The first contrast; (2) The second contrast; (3) The connection between them; application, (1) Looking at the unseen will give us all the good there is in the things which are seen; (2) We get good out of the unpleasant things of life "while we look," etc.; (3) It is thus that our afflictions develop the heroic element of our nature.

3. When it is *both distributed* through the sermon *and compact* at the close. This may be regarded as the perfect application. Scripture truth is so full of applicatory forces, of that "strange movingness which is to be found nowhere else," that, in the hands of an earnest preacher, it does not readily lend itself to a merely intellectual discussion, with the practical assigned its own place and restricted thereto. The spirit of application will pervade the entire discourse, and make itself felt again and again. But this same spirit of earnestness that prompts continuous application may prompt the compact application of the whole truth at the close of the discussion. And when both these can be employed effectually, the applicatory force of the sermon reaches its highest development. Examples are numerous and familiar.

It must have been thus, if we may judge from his writings, that the Apostle of the Gentiles applied the Word in his preaching. In the Epistle to the Romans, e.g., now and then, in the progress of his great argument, he strikes home with

exhortation and command upon the reader's will. "And reckonest thou this, O man, who judgest them that practice such things, and doest the same, that thou shalt escape the judgment of God? Or despisest thou," etc. (ii. 3–5). See also vi. 12, viii. 12, 13, and others. The discussion closes with the sublime doxology, "O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and the knowledge of God! how unsearchable are His judgments, and His ways past tracing out. . . . For of Him, and through Him, and unto Him, are all things. To Him be the glory forever. Amen" (xi. 33–36). But the epistle is not yet ended: "I beseech you therefore, brethren," continues the inspired preacher, "by the mercies of God, to present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God" (xii. 1),—and on through four chapters we have the closing application of this most argumentative and profound of the Epistles.

4. When the *application of the last division is made to serve as the conclusion of the sermon.* Shall we condemn this procedure on the ground that it substitutes, either intentionally or unintentionally, the conclusion of a division for that of the sermon taken as a whole? Not if the divisions be arranged in oratorical order; for, in this case, the last division is not simply *a* division: the ideas and the force of all the others have been more or less effectually poured into it. So it represents, in a manner, the whole discussion; and it may develop a conclusion more forcible than one of a less specific character would be. Dr. William M. Taylor's sermon on "Providence" (Gen. l. 20) is a good example. The divisions are the following: (1) The providence of God is His controlling superintendence; (2) It is universal; (3) It is carried on in harmony with what we call natural laws; (4) It is carried on for moral and religious ends; (5) It contemplates the highest good of those who are on the side of holiness and truth. The arrangement is oratorical, or climactic; and the concluding appeal grows out of the last division.

III. **Its Materials and Forms.**

Each kind of material finds its own form; hence the two things may be considered together.

1. The first is *recapitulation*. Here we sum up in one continuous statement the chief points (which are usually the divisions) of the sermon; so that the congregation may see them all in a single comprehensive glance, and feel their combined force. You have announced your theme, and have demonstrated its contents; now you gather these contents together and show them in their unity, thus restating the theme with greater fullness and effect. It is like placing side by side on your table the contents of a cabinet which you had first exhibited distinctly one by one.

It is no artificial process. It was not devised by a convention of bookish and unpractical rhetoricians and imposed by them on public speakers. Quite natural to an oratorical temperament is the feeling expressed by John Summerfield, listening to the trial of causes in the courts of Dublin, in his boyhood: "Oh, how I should like to *sum up!*" Indeed you may hear recapitulation practised constantly in animated and earnest conversation. An opinion is stated, and reasons are given and elaborated one after another; then, if the discussion has gone on for some time, they are repeated in their briefest form, as one whole body of proof.

Besides, every preacher avails himself personally of its advantages in his preparation to preach. It is not enough to think out the plan of the sermon. In order to fix it in his memory, and to make sure of having it at command when needed, he must cast his eyes over the ground more rapidly, so as to have and to hold the main features of it in one comprehensive glance. Some such process may reasonably be expected to be helpful, in a similar manner, to the hearer.

When the proposition of a sermon is announced, the explanation and proof of it are simply promised,—are floating

vaguely in the future. The recapitulation is equivalent to the reannouncement of the proposition, not now as a promise, but with all the power of the sermon enforcing it.

Still, recapitulation is by no means always required. It is specially suited to argumentative discourses; and is least employed in expository preaching. Many of our sermons are not elaborate enough to require it; and to recapitulate in these cases may produce the effect of feeble repetition.

Much, however, depends on how it is done. If with brevity and simplicity, recapitulation will rarely be obtrusive. Suppose, e.g., you have chosen as your theme some man or woman of the Bible,—say, King Ahaz (2 Chron. xxviii. 27). Your analysis of his character has brought out four personal qualities, which you have taken as your divisions and have set forth, one after another, in an expository and illustrative development. Here is nothing difficult to follow,—nothing argumentative or profound,—but the simplest and most rememberable sort of sermon. Nevertheless, it would not be a mere formality to sum up these four qualities in a single sentence at the close,—"Ahaz was *frivolous*, *unbelieving*, *idolatrous*, *intractable*." It would be the simple synthesis that might be expected to follow your analysis.

There may be a progressive recapitulation. In the statement of a division the preceding division may be recalled: "Not only . . . but . . ." Or, in connection with the announcement of the last division, all the preceding ones may be rehearsed: "We have seen . . . and now, finally . . . "

Or we may recapitulate some special part of the amplification, and not the whole. E.g., in preaching on the text, "Lead us not into temptation," we may see fit to give a brief summation of the explanatory part of the sermon—because of the somewhat difficult distinctions that had to be made—before advancing further. A good actual example may be found in Dr. South's sermon on "The Plea of a Tender Conscience" (1 Cor. viii. 12). The fine casuistic discussion of

the first division, "What a weak conscience is," he recapitulates as follows:

"Now from these three things put together, I conceive, we may collect this full description of a weak conscience; namely, that it is such a one as obliges a man to forbear any thing or action, from a suspicion that it is unlawful, or at least an ignorance that it is lawful; which ignorance or suspicion was not caused or occasioned by his own will, but either by the natural weakness of his understanding, or the want of such means of knowledge as were absolutely necessary to inform him.

"This description ought well to be observed and remembered in the several parts of it; as being that which must give light into all the following particulars.

"And thus much for the first thing proposed, which was to show what this weak conscience is."

Note, also, that, while recapitulation may have applicatory force, its characteristic quality is not application. It is rather preparatory to the other forms of the conclusion, which are distinctively applicatory, persuasive, *concluding*. It cannot well stand alone.

2. We notice another means that preachers employ to make the final application of their subjects to the mind and will of the hearer. They *illustrate*. For, as we have already seen, illustrations are not simply windows to let the light in, but, like actual windows, they admit both light and heat. They are intended to excite the imagination, the conscience, the desires, and thus realize the truth to the mind, and even deliver it on the will. Hence their applicatory power. A perfect example is the conclusion of our Lord's Sermon on the Mount.

Often there is no more appropriate closing word—none which could more vividly re-present the great truth of the sermon, and set it astir in the conscience and the heart—than an illustrative example. See Dr. William M. Taylor's sermon entitled "Our Father" ("Limitations of Life, and Other

Sermons"), and Dr. T. L. Cuyler's on "The Miracle at the Gate Beautiful" ("Stirring up the Eagle's Nest, and Other Practical Discourses"). I will quote the closing application of the latter:

"I seem to see the wretched race of man, crippled by sin and wasted by spiritual hunger, sitting by the gateway to a temple of heavenly purity which it is powerless of itself to enter. There sits depraved humanity, maimed, guilty, sin-sick, and perishing. ONE approaches, mighty to save. He comes with the kingliness of a God concealed in the lowly guise of the Son of man. He halts. He pities. He stoops and sweetly says, 'Look on ME.'

"Stretching forth a hand pierced with the crucifying nail, He lifts the wretched object to its feet, exclaiming, 'Rise up and walk.' And as the grateful creature clings to its restorer, it beholds through its tears of joy that He is none other than the Son of God. O blessed and adorable Jesus, Thy cross, Thy *cross* is the 'Gate Beautiful' of salvation, through which a redeemed race may enter into a temple not made with hands, eternal in the heavens."

Here is a picture of the imagination. But if you have at command a real incident, I should advise you to give it the preference.

The abuse of this good method is to close with a mere explanatory or pleasing illustration. Why should we so constantly have to be reminded that what is needed in the conclusion, above all other parts of the sermon, is not pleasurable imagination, but practical power. Without this, it is true, the preacher may leave an agreeable impression on the minds of the people, as he ceases to speak; but to please is not to persuade, and so in preaching to quit is not to conclude.

3. Another form of conclusion is the *inferential*. In the body of the sermon a certain truth has been set forth and established; now, at the close, attention is called to certain other truths—usually practical lessons—which may be drawn from

it. These may be either inferences in the strict sense of the term or simply remarks. In other words, they may result inevitably, as logical deductions, from the truth which has been established; or they may arise as suggestions, under some natural and reasonable association of ideas. The conclusion of Phillips Brooks's sermon on "Standing before God" ("And I saw the dead, small and great, stand before God," Rev. xx. 12) is the unexpected practical *remark* that *we are standing before God now*. The conclusion of Dr. Deems's sermon, already referred to, "The Sign of Jonas" (Matt. xii. 39), is the familiar and easily anticipated *inference* that *the refusal to believe and obey Him who was thus declared to be the Son of God by the resurrection from the dead must be followed by condemnation.*

It is hardly necessary to say which of these two forms of the inferential conclusion is inherently the more forcible, and consequently, other things being equal, the preferable. The logical inference is clothed with all the force of a demonstrated truth. The suggested remark may have any imaginable degree of force in itself; but it stands alone,—no power of argument and of truth immediately behind it.

It is worthy of note, also, that inferences may constitute the body of the discourse. In this case the text is briefly explained, and a series of distinct lessons, more or less directly practical, are drawn from it; and this is the whole sermon. A very simple method of sermonizing; and one of the most interesting and useful. As an example of this method, take Dr. William M. Taylor's sermon (cited a few moments ago in another connection) on the fatherhood of God; in which, after a brief explanation of the sense in which God is the Father of all mankind, and the special sense in which He is the Father of regenerate souls, the preacher proposes to "pass in review a few of the present practical advantages" which the Christian derives from his filial relation to God,—viz.: it gives (1) new life to his devotions, (2) new joy to the discharge of

duty, (3) new significance to trials, (4) new glory to his conceptions of the heavenly world. Another good example is Bishop Simpson's sermon on "Stephen's Life and Vision." Here, after two sentences of introduction, the first of the five lessons that make up the discourse is stated.

Or, to take still another example, suppose the text to be 1 Corinthians iv. 7, "And what hast thou that thou didst not receive?" The doctrine is that all our good is the gift of God. Now this theme might be developed in the way of exposition or of illustration. But, on the other hand, the particular object which the preacher has in view may lead him to omit all such amplification, and to begin at once to draw practical inferences from the text,—such, for example, as the following: If all we have is the gift of God, then it becomes us to cherish (1) a spirit of gratitude, (2) a spirit of humility, (3) a spirit of hopefulness, (4) a sense of accountability. In this case the whole sermon would be inferential.

Now Scripture truth is so full of inferences, both doctrinal and directly practical, that the preacher constantly finds it necessary to make selection of the most suitable. And in this it will be well for him to give heed especially to these three principles:

(*a*) The principle of *just enough*. Announce no inference which, for lack of time, cannot be forcibly presented. Be willing to reject many. One is often sufficient.

(*b*) The principle of *unity*. The materials of inference must be distinct from those of the body of the discourse, and yet in a line with them,—new, but not foreign.

But it needs more particularly to be noted that the inferences must be in vital harmony with one another. Their differences should not amount to diversity. Good inferences constitute a single course of thought; somewhat zigzag, perhaps, but keeping one general direction. This principle is disregarded in the following example: Text, Acts ix. 5; proposition, "The Oneness of Christ and His People"; conclusion, "We may

learn from this truth something of (1) the unspeakable love of Jesus, (2) the source of spiritual power, (3) the principle of Christian unity, (4) how we may minister to the Lord Jesus."

(*c*) The principle of *climax*. The strongest part of the sermon should be the conclusion; in like manner, the strongest inference in the conclusion should be the last.

4. Still another form of conclusion, and that in which the whole conclusion naturally culminates, is the *hortatory*. The sermon is a distinctively persuasive address; the conclusion is the distinctively persuasive part of the sermon. And now we have to learn that the exhortation is the distinctively persuasive part of the conclusion. For what is it to exhort? It is (1) to take the same truth that has been presented in didactic or argumentative or illustrative form, and present it in the *forms of feeling*. But feeling in the speaker will excite, through the contagion of sympathy, corresponding feeling in the hearer; and with this added to the feeling produced directly by the truth itself, the influence exerted on the hearer's will is decidedly more powerful. And (2) exhortation puts the truth into the *form of willing*. "Come," "Do this," "Give up your sins," "Choose," "Let us follow the Saviour,"—these are entreaties and commands, imperatives, will-words; and their natural tendency, likewise, is (always, however, through the excitation of motives,—hope, fear, duty, love) to influence the will of the hearer.

Let me illustrate the nature of exhortation by showing somewhat more fully what kinds of language it employs. Simple sentences may be classified as follows: declarative, interrogative, imperative, optative, exclamatory. The same truth substantially may be expressed in any one of these forms. But it is almost exclusively with the first form that we have been occupied thus far in our studies. This is the only logical form, the only kind of sentence that logic can deal with. It is with the declarative sentence that we explain, relate, argue, and illustrate: it is this sentence that we use in recapitulation

and in inference. How about the other forms? They are forms of feeling or of willing, in contradistinction to this, which is a form of thought. And it is in them that the exhortation is given. So far as we use them in other parts of the sermon, it is for the expression of feeling or of willing rather than for the expression of thought. Exhortation claims them as peculiarly its own.

Now if there be any one supreme preaching gift, it would seem to be this. Surely this at least is one of the very best gifts,—to be earnestly coveted and diligently improved. It is that with which the preacher sometimes begins his ministry. But though first to be exercised, it is often last to be perfected. In fact, it sometimes appears to wane, while the intellectual element of preaching rises into prominence. But why should not the two elements grow and increase together? It is deplorable that the more truth the preacher has to teach, the less fervidly he should press it home; that the more accurate and affluent his language, the less urgent it should become.

The difficulties of exhortation arise out of the fact of its being so largely dependent on the feelings, which are not immediately under the control of the will. Ordinarily it is impossible to sustain a course of direct hortation very long. When forced it becomes unreal. Its genuine, vital tone falls away, and the appeal degenerates into a harangue. But on the other hand, this unbroken continuity is not necessary, nor even desirable. Exhortation is best interspersed with explanation, reasoning, illustration, description,—thrilling them all with its warmth and power, and persistently reappearing in its own proper forms.

Besides, we must not forget that the feelings are under the control of the will indirectly. Thought and choice may be fixed voluntarily on their objects; and some measure of the appropriate feeling is their invariable accompaniment. Enter the pulpit with your whole mind penetrated and possessed with the theme presently to be preached, and there must be some

palpitation of feeling. Therefore do not say, "I cannot exhort." Every earnest preacher can, and does; not, indeed, after some other man's manner, but according to his own gift and in his own way.

"But I am not emotional." Nor is there any necessity that you should be. The feelings which it is essential for you to excite in your hearers are *motives*. Emotions, as we saw in our study of Persuasion, are of secondary importance. Cherish deep in your own heart Christian motives, stronger and stronger, as your life and ministry go on. Live by them every day. Be a good man; do the commands of duty; love your fellow-men; desire their happiness and perfection, their eternal salvation; keep near to God; live in daily realization of your holy and blessed calling, as a Christian and a minister of Christ; and you will be constrained to exhort men to repentance and perseverance in the way of life. Yours will be the spirit that makes the practical writings of a Baxter one constantly renewed and soul-stirring exhortation, as of a man far more deeply conscious of eternity than of the fading shows of time. Yours will be the same spirit that glowed and flamed through the great-hearted apostle's reiterated appeals:—"Knowing therefore the fear of the Lord, we persuade men. . . . For the love of Christ constraineth us. . . . We beseech you on behalf of Christ, be ye reconciled to God. . . . We entreat also that ye receive not the grace of God in vain. . . . Behold, now is the day of salvation. . . . Our mouth is open unto you, O Corinthians, our heart is enlarged. . . . Be not unequally yoked with unbelievers: for what fellowship have righteousness and iniquity? or what communion hath light with darkness? And what concord hath Christ with Belial? or what portion hath a believer with an unbeliever?" (2 Cor. v., vi.)

LECTURE XX

LITERARY FORM

IT is vain to belittle style. The man who professes to care only for what is said, and not in the least for the manner in which it is said, wishes to express his extraordinary preference so as to have it understood and appreciated; and this is to wish a certain style of expression. To be consistent, such a man must doom himself to perpetual silence. All acts are done more or less perfectly; and style, or literary form, is simply the more or less perfect way in which we perform the act of verbal communication. Even the drayman unloading crockery at the store door is expected to do it right, or, as we sometimes say, in good style: much more is the right manner of speech obligatory upon the speaker. There is always a *how* as well as a *what;* and it is a thoughtless or a narrow mind that loses sight of either.

Nothing is easier than to show the different effects produced by different forms of expression. Take as an example the first sentence of the Pilgrim's Progress: "As I walked through the wilderness of this world, I lighted on a certain place where was a den, and laid me down in that place to sleep." Some writers would have said: "I was once incarcerated in Bedford jail"; others, perhaps: "As I was pursuing my way through the difficulties and dangers of this present state of existence, I discovered a certain locality in which was a den, and, prostrating myself on the ground, lapsed into a profound slumber";

others, again, might have said: "I lighted on a certain place where was a den, and laid me down in that place to sleep, as I walked through the wilderness of this world." Now I pass no opinion upon the relative merits of these sentences. I wish only to note the different impressions produced by them.

Several aspects of the subject invite attention:

I. **The Importance of Attention to Style.**

It seems to be supposed by some that a good style cannot be acquired, but that, if it come at all, it will come of itself, as the heart beats or the nerves vibrate; that the effort to improve one's style is likely to result in spoiling it; that, so far as the use of our mother-tongue is concerned, we had better be unembarrassed by "that cobweb of the brain, learning"; that the John Bunyans of literature write all the better because they are not rhetoricians and have received no literary culture. Are we required, then, to believe that the ignorant express themselves better than the intelligent? that they take a better part in conversation, write better, speak better before an audience?

People do not succeed as a matter of course, in saying what they wish to say. Recently I was called on to visit a poor woman upon her death-bed. Her sister, who lived at a distance, entered the room; and in order to soothe the dying woman's agitation at the unexpected meeting, said in a tender tone: "Don't be *frightened*, sister." Was that a fitly spoken word? Would not a cultivated woman probably have had an apter word at command? In like manner does the public speaker err many times through lack of intelligence and acquired skill in the use of language.

As to glorious John Bunyan, who was born in about the same state of life as the two women I have just spoken of, we may be sure that he had to *learn* to write, no less than to mend his pots and kettles. Look at the man and his schooling,—his extraordinary genius, his constant intercourse with plain-spoken people in English villages and in the army, his varied struggles, adventures, and sufferings, his thrilling religious

experience, his perfect sincerity, his wide sympathy and human kindliness, his sweet and catholic Christian spirit, his predominant desire to do good, his perpetual preaching and writing, his twelve years' absorption of the English Bible in Bedford jail. Is this the man whose literary success is to make us careless about the improvement of our literary gift? Moreover, one should read Bunyan's "Sermons," and should attempt to read his "Solomon's Temple Spiritualized," before deciding whether a competent teacher of rhetoric might not have done even "the most popular religious writer in the English language" some needful service.

"But may we not expect a good style to come as the result of general knowledge and mental growth?" Undoubtedly, in the same sense in which we may expect that the ability to expound a passage of Scripture, to build up an argument, to analyze a character, or to think out a plan of discourse, will increase as a result of general knowledge and culture. Instruct and strengthen the powers of the mind, and it can do anything better. But it is equally true that a special aptitude is best acquired by efforts wisely directed to that particular end. We were not born with a knowledge of English, nor of a single one of its hundred thousand words. There is no "*mother*-tongue." Had we been stolen away in infancy by the Arabs, we should readily have come to express our desires in Arabic, and have been repelled by the barbarous jargon of any English stranger that chanced to cross our path. What we know of our vernacular we have learned, much of it still remaining practically a foreign tongue to us all; and that mastery of English, that ready command of its words and phrases, which we desire, will be ours only as an acquisition for which the inevitable price of patient and well-directed labor must be paid.

II. **The All-comprehensive Quality of Style.**

Remembering that the sole office of speech is mental communication, the making known of the speaker's mental state

to others, we may say that the one all-inclusive quality of style is *expressiveness*. If before our friend spoke or wrote, we could know exactly what was in his mind, any word from him would be useless. This ideally perfect knowledge no language can convey; but in proportion as it is conveyed, the language is perfect. What excellence could be added to a completely expressive style? Such a style would, of course, be clear—when the idea was clear in the speaker's own mind. But would it also be forceful or beautiful? Unquestionably so, when there was force or beauty in the speaker's mind. For the office of speech is to communicate not only ideas, but feelings and energy,—in brief, the whole mental state. Take as an example the sentence already quoted from the Pilgrim's Progress. Why does Bunyan employ the somewhat "suspended" sentence, instead of the very "loose" one in which the same idea might have been expressed? Because the suspended sentence is more forcible. It strikes a harder blow. But this means that it expresses more of the writer's energy. The force no less than the idea is in the writer; the sentence conveys both to the reader.

So, likewise, a beautiful style is one that conveys not simply the idea, but also the sense of beauty with which it is accompanied. Hence the writer employs rhythm, both in prose and poetry, to express that beautiful thing, the feeling of melody; and chooses apt descriptive or figurative words to express those beautiful images of the imagination which are the frequent forms of our thought. The first stanza of poetry that comes to mind shall serve as an illustration:

> "And when the morn came, dim and sad,
> And chill with early showers,
> Her quiet eyelids closed—she had
> Another morn than ours."

Now would it not have been equally appropriate to say: "At daybreak she died"? It would have been more appro-

priate if such an assertion represented the whole state of the author's mind; but if he wished, as in fact he did, to express likewise his imaginative sense of harmony between the chill, uncertain morning and the sad fact of untimely death, and to confess his faith that from the death-bed about which all night long the broken-hearted watchers were waiting and praying, a lovely soul had passed into the heavenly life,—with this feeling and purpose in his mind, the bare record of the fact of death would have been extremely inexpressive.

The notion that style is an extra, a something added to expression, a toothsome dessert after the meal, is a delusion and a snare. Pathos, humor, wit, beauty, unity, force, ideas, are no more in the language we use than in the inkstand or the vocal cords; and they can no more be found outside the mind than created out of nothing. They exist, if at all, in us; they are states of the soul; and language is only a vast and ordered multitude of physical symbols, mostly arbitrary, often misleading, and always inadequate, by which communication has been established between soul and soul. It enables us to "express *ourselves*." My words can have no further significance than that they waken in some other soul a state corresponding to my own. Longinus has said, in his famous monograph, that sublimity of language "is an echo of the inward greatness of the soul." But he might have made a similar remark concerning beauty, or energy, or any other property of style, primary or secondary, that he had chosen to discuss. If it be not the echo of some quality or condition of the writer's own mind, it is at least the echo of an echo.

To illustrate further. It might be charged as a defect upon some piece of writing that it had not enough "ands," "therefores," "notwithstandings," and such like connectives. But the meaning of the criticism would be, either that the writer himself did not see clearly the various relations of thought which these words are used to represent, or that he did not

express enough of them to his reader. It could hardly be meant that the style would be improved by gathering up a handful of connectives and scattering them at random over the piece. "Express the relations of your thought," is what we should say to the writer. Or the objection might be made to a piece of writing that it was lacking in beauty. But when we seek the source of this defect we find that the writer either was deficient in the esthetic imagination, or for some reason did not express the pleasing forms and colors in which the succession of ideas appeared to his own mind. And the remedy would certainly not be to gather flowers of language from foreign sources and stick them in among his own words, —the dead among the living. So far as he is able to see the beauty of thought and to give it expression, he may command a beautiful literary form; but no further. So with every quality of style; it is not expression plus some excellence, but expression pure and simple.

The principle applies not only to words and constructions, but even to marks of punctuation. These help to express the movements, pauses, and transitions of thought. Why do we write in sentences, beginning each with a capital letter and closing it with a period,—using dashes, commas, etc., between the two extremes? Because we think in that way; not on a dead level, but rising and falling; not uninterruptedly, but brokenly, work and rest, a movement and a pause. Primitive languages were destitute of such marks, not because the writers did their thinking in a different manner from ours (for of course they did not), but because these early writers had not learned to express their mental movements as perfectly as we express ours. Punctuation, then, with its corresponding pauses and inflections in speech, is a part of language; and language becomes perfect in proportion as it fulfils its one sole office of expression.

III. **Means of Developing the Power of Expression.**

Every public speaker has this power to begin with. Not,

indeed, by nature, as every one has memory or reasoning power or natural affection; but as an acquisition of early childhood. The capacity and the impulse are innate, beyond question. The baby has them; but the few swift years between babyhood and oratorical maturity mark an incalculable enlargement of ability and resources.

What are some of the conditions and means of this development?

1. *The general development of the man.* The manner of speech, as well as the subject-matter, is favorably affected by all enlargement of the sphere of knowledge and affection, by all holding of the will to the supreme Christian purpose, even by all increase of physical vigor.

I do not think we shall ever emphasize too strongly the principle that the act is but the expression of the person. But there are conditions more special:

2. *Conversation.* Here is an ever-present opportunity. Almost by this means alone the generality of persons acquire their command of language, such as it is. To be a good converser promises much for literary power. Talk so as to interest those with whom you are talking. Reject all coarse or ungrammatical expressions, and all slang; be sparing of "dictionary words"; but indulge freely your liking for apt and idiomatic English. Then, at the study-table and before the audience, you will not be bothered by the intrusion of familiar but inadmissible words. The language that comes of itself will be that which is best suited to your purpose.

I used to have a boyish fancy for the man whose tongue was loosed only when he began to preach; but such an ideal did me no good, either in the pulpit or out of it. If I were asked now which gift is to be the more earnestly coveted, that of effective speech to individuals, or that of effective public speech, I should not know how to decide between the two. But there is no conflict; each will help the other. How can it be otherwise, when the best public speech is simply public

talking? If we had heard the conversation of such a man as Frederick Robertson—bright, serious, deep, imaginative, "with all the variety of a great stream, quick, rushing, and passionate when his wrath was awakened against evil"—we should not have been surprised to hear him talk even in his wondrous way in the pulpit.

3. *Familiarity with the laws and usages of one's own language.* Not that the preacher need aspire to become a scholar in English. That is not his calling; and even if it were, he would not find his philology of much service in improving his style. But the ability to analyze any sentence that may be given him, and to see at once, as if by intuition, whether it be well or ill constructed, will help him no little in putting his own words together. Grammar and rhetoric are disparaged by men of two classes only: by the man who knows nothing about them, and by the man who, with their aid, has advanced (or thinks he has) beyond the need of them, and is now ungrateful enough to speak lightly of his former servants.

4. *Reading.* Not reading merely or chiefly for the sake of the style. I should think this a poor sort of task-work. Read for the subject; but note incidentally the manner of expression, so as to get a hold upon words and constructions that heretofore you have not had at command, and thus enlarge your own vocabulary and power of speech.

Moreover, bear in mind the inevitable formative influence which your author's style will tend to exert, for good or evil, upon your own; and accept or reject it accordingly. In spite of your efforts, however, this good or evil influence will affect you to some extent: therefore do not read an indifferently written book or newspaper—when it can be avoided. Dr. Stalker says that in going over one of his old sermons he can almost tell whether or not he was reading good literature during the time of its composition. But especially are we to remember that our question must always be, not whether the critic would regard the piece of writing as "literature," but whether its

literary form would be suitable for the preaching of the Gospel to our congregations. Supposing, for example, you could make the style of Dr. Isaac Barrow or Dr. Chalmers or Canon Mozley, or even Robert Hall, entirely your own, would it be expedient to do so? By no means. It is from the pulpits of the present generation—from those of them that best succeed in reaching the popular mind—that we must learn how to win attention and to communicate Christian truth. We are sent to preach the Gospel to men in their own tongue in which they were born.

The ministerial student at college, like other college students, is likely to pick up a bookish style. Its tendency is to disappear and give place to nature and simplicity before his graduation, though sometimes it cleaves to him through life. But still greater is the danger that besets the uneducated young preacher when he begins to make acquaintance with books. For why should not this young man, as well as his brother at college, imagine that the *literary* rather than the *talking* style is the thing he wants? And who is at hand from day to day to laugh him out of his stilted feebleness? We have all met with this perverted young preacher who cannot use the language of the people in the pulpit; who never "hides his face," but always "conceals his countenance," never "gives a caution," but always "utters an uncompromising caveat," never condescends to speak against "false views," but mercilessly exposes the various pestilential forms of "pseudo-philosophy"; who delights in such words as "eliminate," "coördinate," "potentiality," "duality," "antithesis," and the like, which mean nothing to most of his hearers and often very little to himself. Do not let us tread in his stately steps. Still we must read not less, but more and more.

5. *Constant writing and speaking.* The latter you will have to do; the former it will be very unwise to neglect. For, after all, the indispensable condition of learning to use any instrument well is to keep using it the best we can. Dr. Phelps has

spoken, in this connection, of his unbounded admiration for mechanical dexterity: "I stand in awe of a carpenter, a tailor, a machinist, a locksmith, a sailor, who are well to do at their trades. They manipulate their work with such marvelous adroitness that to me it is a miracle. They are all experts from another world than mine. Their arms, fingers, legs, feet, eyes seem inspired." But when we venture to ask these clever workmen the secret of their skill and success, the answer from them all is the same: "It comes through practice." May we expect to perfect ourselves otherwise in the higher art of speech?

The mechanical expert, however, is not altogether right in his answer: the skill by which he is distinguished has not been acquired by practice alone. Nor will yours be. For the probability is that, as a young speaker, you have some bad tendencies, or even some bad habits; and mere constant writing and speaking will not correct these, but will probably have exactly the opposite effect. Cicero tells us that certain young orators of his day were misled by the saying that "men by speaking succeed in becoming speakers,"—forgetting that it is also said with equal truth that "men by speaking badly make sure of becoming bad speakers." Is it not so in conversation? If much talking sufficed to develop good talking, how familiar a personage the fine conversationist would be! Speech, the orator's great instrument, must be used with wide-awake intelligence, and *this* use of it continually repeated.

6. *A full mind.* Have more than enough to say. Not otherwise can there be in your words that combination of ease and energy, of gentleness and strength, which marks the master of speech. There must be fullness of thought pressing for utterance. Ideas dragged forth from a half-empty mind can produce but a feeble impression. The little that is said will not be well said. And when the attempt is made—by no means an unheard-of experiment—to express *more* than one has to say, feebleness will be attenuated into vagueness or swollen into bombast. Such labor of tongue or pen, spent on

an impossible object, is energy thrown away. The school-boy was right who began the composition on which he had expended time and toil in vain, with the reflection: "It is rather difficult and pretty impossible to convey unto others those ideas of which you are not yourself possessed of." But when a man is ready to say with Arnold of Rugby, "I must write or die," his word will be with power. Eloquence is a brimful cup.

IV. **The True Mental Attitude in the Act of Composition.**

Let us now suppose the theme to have been selected, the greater part of the materials gathered, and the time of utte ance to be at hand. The emergency is upon us; either with tongue or pen, we must speak our mind. No time now to consider whether we can or not; whatever our indisposition or incompetency, it must be done. What, then, shall be our mental attitude, in order to command an effective mode of expression?

I will say this: In public speaking, as we shall see later, the whole energy of the mind must be given to the *subject*, the *audience*, and the *object*. The speaker is scarcely to notice the words and constructions he is using. Any consciousness of these which he may allow himself must be quite subordinate to the main process of delivery. He is not to criticise his style, nor to admire it, even for a moment. He may not pause to correct mistakes, unless they be glaring, or be such as may be rectified with a word,—as one would brush aside a wasp or a fly, and hardly know that he had done it.

Similarly in the first writing of a sermon, let the style be what it will, without special thought or care. Fix your mind on the *subject* (for how otherwise can you find anything to write?); on the *audience*, always expressing yourself to them, as in direct address, and not as to a reader; on the *object*, asking yourself, "What am I saying this for? When my end is gained, what will have been gained?"

Write rapidly, somewhat as you would have to speak to an audience; making no unnecessary pauses; not occupying three hours, just because you have them, with work that might be done in half an hour; pressing right on, though with ill-jointed sentences and inaccurate expressions, till you shall have set down substantially what you have to say. Do not run the risk of losing a whole train of thought in the endeavor to catch some elusive word. Do not stop your plow to kill a mouse.

But now appears an opportunity, and with it, as always, an obligation, peculiar to the study. You can revise your composition. You can go over it again and again, to lop off excrescences, to simplify labored passages, to strengthen weak constructions, to complete incomplete sentences and recast such as are hopelessly mixed.

What lesson may we find in the following extract from a lately published letter of Cardinal Newman's? "I write, I write again; I write a third time in the course of six months. Then I take the third; I literally fill the paper with corrections, so that another person could not read it. I then write it out fair for the printer. I put it by; I take it up; I begin to correct again; it will not do. Alterations multiply, pages are rewritten, little lines sneak in and crawl about. The whole page is disfigured; I write again; I cannot count how many times this process is repeated." One thing is certain: it is the confession of a master of the English tongue.

Is this an artificial process? Yes; if it be artificial in a child just learning the rudiments of the art of speech to try again when he has failed in the first effort; if it be artificial in a penman to cancel and rewrite an illegible word; if it be artificial in a blacksmith to keep putting his iron into the fire and hammering it on the anvil till it takes the desired shape: quite artificial in the sense in which it is so for a man to be an artificer. If we be so constituted as to be able to do at once and perfectly whatever we can do at all, this process of

revising our literary compositions is thoroughly unnatural. Otherwise, to retouch and perfect what has been written is no less accordant with the dictates of nature than is any other use of the pen.

Observe that while the attention is given chiefly, in this process of revision, to the literary form, the whole work is done with continual reference to the audience and the object.

Here, for a season at least, is constantly recurring drudgery and toil; but here also is the secret of a good literary style,— in this same humble, painstaking, and persistent toil. Nor will the wise and true-hearted preacher hesitate. "He pondered, and sought out, and set in order many proverbs. The Preacher sought to find out acceptable words" (margin, *words of delight*) (Eccl. xii. 9, 10).

LECTURE XXI

LITERARY FORM—EFFECTS OF THE MENTAL ATTITUDE

WHAT may we expect from the right mental attitude in the composition of the sermon? What elements of power will it impart to speech? It is this inquiry on the subject of literary form that now remains for consideration.

1. It will insure *naturalness*. It is in the order of nature, and in no other. For, inasmuch as speech is expressive, not introspective or self-centered, to lose all thought of self and of manner for its own sake, and to fix the mind on subject, audience, and object, is to make ready for using speech for its proper purpose. Denying self, you will gain your true self,—every faculty at work according to the law of its own nature. There will be no fanciful or ambitious dallying with words; but your style, whatever may be its prevailing characteristics,—figurative or literal, plain or elegant, passionate or calm, sententious or flowing,—will have in it your peculiar elements of power. It will be, not some great speaker's, not any other's, but *your own*. Whether strong or weak, your mind will be a fountain,—a chalybeate spring, not an artificial mixture of rain-water and iron.

2. It will promote *clearness*. For surely the communication of one's state of mind on a certain subject to an audience involves the making of one's self understood.

Compare vocal music and speech. You are listening to a sweet singer whose heart is in his song; and though not a

word of it all should be intelligible, yet your own heart is stirred. True, if the sentiment as well as the sounds were making itself known, the pleasure would be decidedly greater; but even without the sentiment much of the intended effect is realized. Because music is designed to reach the imagination and the heart chiefly through the sensuous nature. But with oratory it is not so. Oratory is designed to reach the heart and the will chiefly through the intellect. Accordingly, an address that cannot be understood must yield a poor result. Not absolutely nothing; for there is a wonderful music even in the speaking voice which of itself may bring the hearer's soul into some sort of contact with the speaker's. When Francis d'Assisi sent out his preachers, he bade them go, as he himself went, even to men of other lands; for he felt that somehow the substance and spirit of their message would make itself felt. In like manner, when Bernard of Clairvaux preached in Germany the Second Crusade, the people, before the interpreters could translate his language, hastened to embrace the cause which he advocated with such passionate sincerity. Here is a crumb of comfort for the unintelligible preacher. Let him feel his message and deliver it with enthusiasm; and though his hearers cannot understand him, it is possible for them to catch the contagion of his godly earnestness and zeal. But this is not really to "*preach* the Word": it is music rather than eloquence.

I have heard a young preacher say, "I use good English; and if the people do not understand me, it is their own fault." Is that the right position to take? If so, why preach at all? Why not say, "The people know they ought to be Christians; if they are not, it is their own fault, and I shall say nothing to them on the subject"? We are sent to help them in their weakness, and "constrain them to come in." Therefore we must use such "English" that not only the willing and attentive, but the inattentive also, may get hold of our meaning.

The determination to be intelligible will keep your preaching

free from technical terms. These are little else than blotches; often they mean no more to the people than so many ink-spots on the written page. Hence the preacher who insists on using the language of the schools must ascribe any lack of interest on the part of the congregation to some other cause than indifference to the Gospel. Would he himself be interested in listening to language which he did not understand, on any subject whatever? Suppose that he went to hear a popular address on some health topic, and the lecturer proved to be a physiological pedant who discoursed on the vitiation of the air by carbon dioxid, and the certainty of anemia in case a sufficient quantity of oxygen is not appropriated by the hemoglobin of the red blood-corpuscles: would that preacher be found in the learned physiologist's audience on the next occasion? Yet the truths of religion are sometimes explained from our pulpits in language which conveys no more meaning to the majority of hearers than do the technics of chemistry and biology.

Sometimes the truly great preachers so misjudge their audiences as to err at this point. A singular instance is furnished in the published sketch of a sermon by the eloquent and lamented Bishop Marvin. The sermon begins: "Are ideas innate? I preach to the common people as well as to metaphysicians; and as there are a great many more of the former than of the latter class, I may be said to preach to them chiefly. I shall, therefore, not attempt to use the word *ideas* in any other than what I suppose to be the meaning received by people of average intelligence. I mean by it the concept of things formed in the mind."

Now the expression "the concept of things formed in the mind" would be equally objectionable, I should think, to metaphysicians and to the rest of the world. But what conceivable object of preaching to "people of average intelligence" could be subserved by such a word as the newly invented psychological term *concept*, even if accurately em-

ployed? A professor of homiletics, Dr. Thomas H. Skinner, is reported to have said, in an address to children: "Children, I propose to give you on the present occasion an epitome of the life of St. Paul. . Perhaps some of you are too young to know what the word *epitome* means. *Epitome*, children, is in its significance synonymous with *synopsis*." This was certainly explaining the unknown by the unknown, if not by the more unknown; but to define an "idea" to people of average intelligence as a "concept" is to explain the well known by the unknown.

Further on in the same discourse we have the following passage: "Through contact with the objective, ideas are evolved into consciousness; and ideas, which are the concepts of things, constitute the condition of all thinking. Thus, by the active power of thought, from primary ideas we go on to all combinations of them, and all those resultant conditions, active and passive, which constitute the highest intellection; for it is not the mere receptivity of the objective which characterizes our being, but, in addition to this, a personal force which responds to the touch of outward things, and in the rebound goes on to active achievement, so that by a reproductive power it multiplies and yields an almost infinite progeny from the impregnating presence of the objective." I could heartily wish that you might become such preachers as Marvin in head, heart, and tongue; but with his "correlatives" and "a prioris" and "subjectivity of the objective" and "reciprocal action of the subjective and objective" and his "postulates" (which turn out to be not postulates at all, but simply statements or propositions),—with all such terms faithfully omitted.

It would seem that a fairly competent Christian preacher ought to show as much wisdom in this matter as any pre-Christian orator and rhetorician. Yet the elegant Cicero could see that "the whole art of speaking is concerned with common usage and the custom and the *language of all men*, so that while in other things that is most excellent which is most

remote from the knowledge and understanding of the illiterate, it is in speaking even *the greatest of faults to vary from the ordinary language* and the practice sanctioned by universal reason." Where, then, is the differing circumstance which makes that familiar and intelligible speech that was demanded by the Roman forum an unsuitable thing for the Christian congregation?

Again, elaborate figures of speech and all showiness of style produce confusion of mind by perverting attention to themselves. Why will some preachers imagine the sunset cloud, because of the gorgeous light on its edges, to be the proper emblem of pulpit diction? or suppose that under any ordinary circumstances they can make a long apostrophe or simile effective in a sermon? Leave out all such inept splendor, no matter how great an expenditure of labor it may have cost you.

If, then, it be asked what amount of ornament a preacher may properly bestow upon his style, the answer is, The same that he would bestow upon his handwriting,—none whatever. In the case not only of the sermon, but of all literature, the word *ornament*, when applied to a true style, is a misnomer. Ornament is something tacked on; style, as we have seen, is expression,—the form of a substance, the manifestation of an inner life. It is the grain of the wood made visible; not veneering, not graining. Ornament tries to win admiration for itself; a true style communicates the subject. What do you wish to put the people in possession of, the truth or your manner of presenting it? If the former, then the style must not be decorated, but simply *expressive*.

True, a certain flashiness of language, which bears about the same relation to clearness as sheet-lightning to the sunrise, will be regarded by some hearers as admirable. But it leaves them uninstructed, all the same. I remember to have heard a friend of mine extolling in extravagant terms a sermon to which he had listened the Sunday before, from that unique

and brilliant genius, William E. Munsey. "Such a way of presenting the truth," he exclaimed, "I never heard." "What was the subject?" I ventured to ask. He could not recall it. "What was the general line of thought?" He didn't know. "Tell me, then, a single thing that he said, from beginning to end." He could tell nothing, not a word; but repeated once more his rapturous opinion of the preacher's unprecedented manner of presenting the truth. My friend belonged to the same class of hearers as the Scotch servant-woman who said of De Quincey—being quite overcome with admiration of his conversational powers—that he "would mak' a gran' preacher," though she was of opinion that "a hantle of the folk wouldna' ken what he was driving at."

"But suppose a man to be a 'unique and brilliant genius,' —or at least suppose him to have a poetic imagination,—so that his thoughts naturally take the form of lovely or splendid images: shall he not be allowed to embellish his style?" Why, if it were desirable in any case, he of all men would be least in need of it. His own natural style, so far as he is able to tell what he sees and feels, will be very beautiful; for it will express the beautiful sentiments of his soul. Where would you have him display his ornaments? Which of the "lilies" of his mind should you like him to "paint" before showing it?

Sometimes, indeed, these fine imaginative minds are unwise enough to attempt ornamentation. And the result is that their grandeur becomes grandiose, and their sublime degenerates into the sublime of nonsense. This is their peculiar danger; just as the argumentative preacher is in danger of becoming sophistical, and the exhorter may find it necessary to repress a tendency to rant.

Now let me insist that I would not have you to depreciate beauty of language; nor to take the literary ascetic as your type of the literary man; nor to say within yourself, "Ah, well, inasmuch as I have not a fruitful fancy, I at least must be content with plain and unattractive forms of speech." Who

could hold up such ideals with an open Bible in his hand? But what I do most earnestly desire is to have you take that mental attitude in which, and only in which, real, purposeful, luminous rhetorical beauty may be expected to appear.

One more caution. A man's style may express a disproportionate amount of real beauty, with reference to the ends of oratory. The beautiful is one aspect of the true, but one only. It is that which charms the imagination, but not that which instructs the understanding or quickens the conscience. So a sermon may be too beautiful; not absolutely, but relatively to its amount of instruction or argument or appeal. Poetry has as good a right to exist as eloquence; but it differs from eloquence in being the expression of the beauty of truth, while eloquence is the expression of the power of truth to convince and persuade. If the preacher have an imaginative and esthetic mind he may easily put too much poetry into his eloquence. On the other hand, if his temperament be prosaic and matter-of-fact, his speech will lack a certain mystic charm that tends greatly to win the heart.

What does Paul mean in 1 Corinthians ii. 1–4, where he reminds the church in Corinth that he came to them without "excellency of speech or of wisdom," and did not "determine to know anything among them, save Jesus Christ, and Him crucified"? Have we here an implied apostolic interdict on the whole study and practice of pulpit rhetoric? In the light of the foregoing principles the apostle's meaning seems plain enough. Either truth or error may be insinuated into the mind under a skilful profusion of beautiful or affecting images and sounds. The rhetoricians sometimes employed them in Paul's day, as they do in our own. Hence oratory itself has been derisively called "the art of deception." Hypnotize your subject, and he will do your will, though with a blind docility and obedience. Cast on him the spell of a powerful oratorical imagination, and a similar result may follow. He will believe and do as you say; but the truth thus received is blindly re-

ceived, and is in danger of abiding in the imagination without working real conviction in the understanding and persuasion in the will. Do we not sometimes find it so in our revivals? A certain imaginative or pathetic style of preaching and singing will bring many to a pleased or a tearful acceptance of the Christian faith; but ere long there is a sad falling away. They felt more of the beauty and the pathos of the Gospel than of its imperative force and its conscience-cleansing power. A preacher suitably gifted with "excellency of speech or of wisdom" may speak those "persuasive words of wisdom" which will produce this kind of conversions; and the faith of the converts will "stand in the wisdom of men." Paul would have no such converts; and not merely that men might be unable to say, "Yes, like any other accomplished orator, he has been able to win some adherents by the witchery of words"; but chiefly because he would have those "adherents" to be genuinely converted Christians. For when the truth is received through the understanding into the conscience and upon the will, its divine renewing energy may be felt "in demonstration of the Spirit and of power"; and the faith of the regenerated soul will stand, "not in the wisdom of men, but in the power of God." This, therefore, was the apostolic method: "By the manifestation of the truth commending ourselves to every man's"—not taste or imagination—"to every man's *conscience* in the sight of God" (2 Cor. iv. 2). Imagination is an imperial gift; pathos may melt and subdue all hearts. Paul employed them both; but always with Christian simplicity, always as subsidiary to instruction and appeal. Make the path of your hearers as smooth and pleasant as possible; but let it be a *path*, not a pleasure-ground. Keep the object of your preaching in view, and press them right on toward that.

3. It will tend to produce an *easy, colloquial, and fluent style of speech.* Write out a discourse in compact and sharply defined sentences; then attempt to deliver it as written; and

you will be disappointed. A sense of unreality will steal the power out of your strongest periods. Why is it that a sermon that *reads* so well should *speak* so ill? You have forgotten a characteristic difference between writing and speech. Writing, and that for the sake of which it is done, reading, are deliberate acts: there is plenty of time. Speech, on the contrary, is spontaneous, quick, fluent, extempore. Accordingly when we stand before a congregation repeating book-language, the people know and we know that we are not talking to them. But we look into their faces as if we were; hence the unnaturalness and consequent feebleness of utterance. "While listening to him," said one of Norman Macleod's hearers, "the thought never crossed my mind that *he had been making a sermon.*" Doubtless Macleod had no such thought crossing his own mind. Whatever had been the character of his preparation, he was now neither making a sermon nor repeating a made sermon; he was just talking right out of his heart to the men and women before him. But when the form of utterance is of a kind to bring before the hearer's imagination the image of book-shelves and writing-paper and a pen laboriously moving across the page,—alas for its power to enter in and take possession of the heart!

Shall the sermon, then, be written in concise and accurate style? It ought to be, if written at all; but a certain ease and diffusiveness must be added before it becomes preachable. A friend of M. Thiers, paying the illustrious orator and statesman a visit on one occasion, found him busily engaged on a speech. "You came just in time," remarked Thiers; "I am just finishing the speech that I am to deliver in the Corps Législatif to-morrow. I will read you some passages, and you may tell me what you think of it." His friend thought it a strong speech, but said that it seemed to lack somewhat of Thiers's easy and natural manner of expression. "You are right," said the orator; "I haven't put in the *negligences* yet." So he added a conversational phrase here and there, softened

down his too stately diction, and thus modified the "oratorical" paragraphs into a talk; and having finished his revision, "Now," he said, "it is *spontaneous*." You will find something similar to be necessary in your preparation to preach. Whatever you may or may not have written down, the sermon will prove a clumsy and unfit instrument on the tongue, unless you somehow "put in the negligences." The "and now's" and "but let us see's" and "is it not so's" may be the marring of an essay, but they are none the less the making of a speech. The written sermon must be dealt with as Dr. Deems treated his exposition of the Epistle of James ("The Gospel of Common Sense"),—"loosened out and inflamed for the pulpit."

The hearer requires more repetition than the reader. Obviously so; for the eye can dwell on the sentence or go back and review at pleasure, while the ear has but a single chance. Hence oratory repeats. Not, indeed, mechanically; not for lack of something to say; but artistically—an illustrative, varied, climactic repetition. President Finney tells us that in the first years of his ministry the preachers sometimes complained of his repetitions. He would "take the same thought, and turn it over and over, and illustrate it in a variety of ways." But Finney had been a member of the legal profession; and lawyers know how necessary it is to do this. Besides, when the preachers said that he would not interest the educated people in that way, he reminded them that "lawyers, judges, and educated men by scores were converted under his ministry," whereas this was not the case under their more literary modes of speech. Of course, both at the bar and in the pulpit repetition may run into prolixity; but this is only the old story of use degenerating into abuse. As to President Finney, it may also be noted that his addresses were directed mainly to the understanding and the conscience; and these are ready to welcome an amount of iteration that would weary and stupefy the heart.

4. It will tend to produce a *concrete*, *specific*, *picturesque*

style. Abstract statements, indeed, are necessary. Shall not the teachings of the Bible be announced as doctrines,—as great and universal truths? But having thus announced a doctrine, we must show it again in the form of an incident, a figure, a man. Having defined, we must illustrate. It is done every day in the lecture-room; and even more strongly is it called for in popular instruction. One preacher declares, in general terms, the goodness of God as shown in nature and in the constitution of man: that is the characteristic mode of his teaching. Another will say: "Let your eyelids fall for a few moments; then imagine that you are never to raise them again; the rest of your life must be spent in utter darkness; then open your eyes, and thank God that you are not blind": that is characteristic of his teaching. Now put the two modes together: let the general truth be stated clear and strong; then send it home through the imagination to the heart in the particular instance,—this is the complete method. But if either of its constituent modes be slighted, let it not be the latter.

Philosophy, history, biography: here is the descending order of intellectual significance, but the ascending order of personal interest. The intellect delights in the general notion, but it is the individual image only that touches the heart. Speak of the great battles of history; and the emotions of your hearers will not be disturbed in the least. But tell of some wounded soldier dying in the hospital, a bright and noble-hearted boy, murmuring in his delirium of the dear old home and the loved faces he is no more to see,—and you will touch the springs of pity and of tears. Many successful books have been written on Christian doctrine and its outcome in daily life and conduct; but the book which has been read most of them all tells in parables how it fared with one troubled and triumphing soul on his way from the City of Destruction to the Celestial City.

Abstract and consecutive thinking is the fruit of greater gifts or a higher culture than most men enjoy. But the picture-making power is active even in the four-year-old child.

You may safely assume that all your hearers are exercising this power constantly and without effort. Try to keep them on the line of abstract thought for any considerable length of time, and (even should you be able to maintain your own footing) the result will be failure. Their minds will slip away and go to making pictures of some sort,—of household affairs, of amusements, of business matters. Let your endeavor be to keep these out by a picturesque presentation of the truth.

Thus the Bible teaches. Open it anywhere, and see if subtilized and philosophic forms of speech have been chosen for the divine revelation. No doubt they would have been, if this revelation had been made to the pure intellect instead of the whole man.

Thus our Lord taught. All through the Gospels we find it so. "When thou prayest"—not *pray in private*—"enter into thy closet, and when thou hast shut the door, pray." "Whosoever heareth these sayings of Mine"—not *shall have security in time of trial*—"I will liken him unto a wise man who built his house upon a rock." "Whosoever shall"—not *show kindness to Christian teachers*—"give to drink unto one of these little ones a cup of cold water only, in the name of a disciple, verily I say unto you, he shall in no wise lose his reward."

> "For Wisdom dealt with mortal powers,
> Where truth in closest words shall fail,
> When truth embodied in a tale
> Shall enter in at lowliest doors."

Indeed, what is the very substance of our preaching? Not an abstract doctrine, but a Being. Truth in the Christian pulpit has another name: it is Christ. Theology is discourse about God. The hope of the world, the power of righteousness in the human heart, the life eternal, is in Christ, is in God. Our Gospel is the evangel of a Person. No man is ready to preach it until his heart has risen up in rapturous love and

loyalty to HIM. "Whom"—not *which*—"*whom* we proclaim,"—the man Christ Jesus, incarnate, living the life of holy love, dying on the cross for the sin of the world, enthroned as King and Saviour of men. Separating the doctrine from the Person and the Life that gave it manifestation, we may express it in abstract and general terms; but such cannot be the characteristic form for the preaching of *Christ crucified.*

Read A. S. Hill's "Foundations of Rhetoric," Dr. Austin Phelps's "English Style in Public Discourse."

LECTURE XXII

THE SPIRIT OF THE SERMON

I MUST tell you of a fear that has haunted me from the very beginning of our studies, and that will probably linger when the last word shall have been spoken. The modern sermon requires elaboration. There must be painstaking exegesis, a discriminating fusion of materials, the proper location and expression of ideas, a structural exhibition of truth. The danger is, that, with the mind occupied about intellectual forms, there will be a loss both of spontaneity and of spiritual power. The sermon will be given out dry as to literary quality, and formally theological rather than truly instructive, religious, and inspiring. For there is something more subtle than truth and more significant than form,—the tone, the spirit, the pulsating life of one's words.

How may the danger be averted? Certainly not by casting all homiletics aside. This would be as if a man should refuse to read because of the temptations of bad literature. There are better preventives. One is,—always to bear in mind the greatness of this source of power in preaching. Another is,—not to restrict our public addresses to sermon forms; but, during our preparatory studies and thereafter, to be instant in season and out of season, to exhort, to make impromptu talks whenever a suitable opportunity occurs. Still another is,—to guard the heart with all diligence, keeping it full of love and light.

Let me try, in the present lecture, to help you somewhat with respect to the first of these rules. I am aware of having called up a subject of which I shall be able to present only a fragment. For the spirit of the sermon is nothing less than the manifested spirit of the man. Whatever of the divine life —of humility, reverence, faith, love of truth, indignation against wrong, Christian compassion—may be in the preacher, the same will become the very breath of life to the sermon. This fundamental truth will keep reappearing through our whole course of study.

But I may lay emphasis at this time on two great and extremely comprehensive qualities.

The first is *humanity*. I shall not attempt to define the term. A pretty fair synonym is *sympathy;* or, from an external point of view, *popularity*. But *humanity* is a greater word than either of these.

It is a thoroughly Christian word. Not that all humane feeling is a product of the Christian revelation. Far from it. The "barbarous" people of the island of Malta showed Paul and his companions, shipwrecked on their shore, "no little kindness," kindling them a fire in the rain and cold. Bishop William Taylor says that he understood our Lord's instructions to His Apostles, that they should take neither purse nor wallet on their evangelizing tour, when he saw the remarkable hospitality of the African villagers to strangers. On the other hand, ecclesiasticism and theological dogma have perpetrated atrocities—as in the case of the Spanish Inquisition—at the recital of which the heart grows sick with horror. A rabbi, representing the prevalent Jewish feeling of extreme unneighborliness to all but fellow-Jews, could ask, "Who is my neighbor?"—and to the Old Testament command, "Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself" (Lev. xix. 18), could add, on his own authority, "And hate thine enemy." A Samaritan could be humane and self-sacrificing toward a fellow-*man*.

Still it is an unquestionable truth that to Christianize is to

humanize. The truest, deepest, fullest humanity will not be found apart from the religion of Jesus. It was an ancient pagan, to be sure, who first gave to a city the name "Philadelphia"; but he did it in honor of his own brother, whom he devotedly loved. Does not every one recognize an act fairly representative of the Christian spirit, when William Penn takes up this same beautiful name and applies it, in a sense so much wider and more human, to the city which he is founding? To know the Son of man and become like-minded with Him is to draw near our fellow-men and love them as no other power on earth can enable us to do. Intellectual culture will have no such effect. The average intellect of the Greeks, in their periods of high civilization, was above that of the English and the American of to-day. In love of enjoyment and in the sense of the beautiful they have never been surpassed. Yet their inhumanity, especially to little children and to the aged, was that of the savage rather than that of the civilized man. "It is but one evidence out of a thousand," says Mahaffy, in his "Social Life in Greece," "that hitherto in the world's history no culture, no education, no political training, has been able to rival the mature and ultimate effects of Christianity in humanizing society."

The tone of the sermon, then, so far as it is truly Christian, will be that of brotherly interest and good will, human, sympathetic with

> "The great Humanity that beats
> Its life along our stormy streets."

The philosopher may spend his days in the study of man; but, as a philosopher, he is wholly uninterested in *men*. It is well that the preacher should have psychological insight and be somewhat of a philosopher; but, as a preacher, he esteems the knowledge of man only as it brings him nearer in knowledge, sympathy, and service to men. It is in them that he is interested. There is an intellectual sympathy,—that of the

mind smitten with the love of truth for its fellow-students. There is the congeniality of culture and tastes. There is an attraction that every one feels in beauty of person and sweetness of manners. And in each of these things there is some trace of humanity. But not much more than a trace. Very few human beings are intellectual or cultured or beautiful. But there are gifts and experiences that are common to the race. The deepest relation between child and sage, criminal and saint, pauper and millionaire, is a very simple one,—identity of nature. The real tragedy of life—birth, companionships, adjustment and maladjustment to circumstances, ignorance of the future, death—is the same in all. Our points of resemblance are of far more importance than our differences. And the spirit of humanity is a fellow-feeling with others in these universal experiences,—with the common sufferings and the common joys of the world.

Now, whatever the character of your congregation, be quite sure of this: they are men of the same senses and affections as yourself and other men. Cold, pure intellects do not exist. If in any audience, one might expect to find them in a court of judges on the supreme bench. But they, too, are human. A friend of mine has told me of two renowned lawyers—one of them his own father—who were talking of their pleadings before the Supreme Court. One had been uniformly successful; the other had frequently failed. "What has made the difference?" he asked of his friend. "I can tell you," was the answer; "you address them as judges, I as men." Figuratively as well as literally, a heart must always accompany a head. Speak to the heart. Speak as a man to men as men. Strike the chords of common human feeling; they are there, behind the eyes into which yours are looking; and you need not be doubtful of some response.

We are to judge others by ourselves; human nature is one. Again, we are not to judge others by ourselves; experiences differ endlessly as to their specific character and intensity.

You are living in comfort. How many of your fellows are comfortable? how many of those immediately around you? Your work tends to uplift and enrich your whole nature; the daily tasks of many are little more than animal drudgery. No terrible secret sorrow is gnawing at your heart; but such anguish is consuming the very life of some whom you meet in the street and in the congregation. You have much to live for; some are tempted to feel that for them there is no longer anything. Know these things; know them by sympathy, in your heart. Go out of self and enter into the lives of men and women that toil, that suffer, that are broken-hearted. On the other hand, learn to catch the reflection on your own spirit of joys that you have never yet personally known, and possibly never will.

But how is it often in our preaching? I wish I could believe Dr. Stalker at fault in a pulpit picture which he has drawn in "The Preacher and his Models":

"There is an unearthly style of preaching, without the blood of life in it: the people with their burdens in the pews—the burden of home, the burden of business, the burden of the problems of the day—while, in the pulpit, the minister is elaborating some nice point, which has taken his fancy in the course of his studies, but has no interest whatever for them. Only now and then a stray sentence may pull up their wandering attention. Perhaps he is saying, 'Now some of you may reply': and then follows an objection to what he has been stating which no actual human being would ever think of making. But he proceeds elaborately to demolish it, while the hearer, knowing it to be no objection of his, retires into his own interior."

Perhaps the severest criticism that has been made on a regular academic and theological education is that it shuts the intending preacher in from the every-day life of the world. If this were only for a short time, instead of an evil we should have a benefit. But six or ten years in the formative period of one's life is a long time. Let it be spent in scholastic

seclusion; and the young scholar comes forth conversant with a certain range of ideas, but somewhat dehumanized. Is it not an advantage of the English over the American system of ministerial training, that the former keeps the student at the university in contact with a large number of fellow-students in all branches of study and in preparation for various professions, while the latter sends him from the college to the seminary for three years of companionship with theological students only? The years of preparatory study ought by all means to be years of genial association with the people of his neighborhood, and of practical Christian work among them.

It is also true, however, that the actual work of the pastorate is well adapted to develop the spirit of humanity. It brings the minister into contact with "all sorts and conditions of men." His place is everywhere. He is everybody's friend, helper, associate, guest. If he continue or become an abstracted, unpractical, bookish man, it will be because he has not been wholly true to his calling. Our hearts will be touched, thrilled, enlarged continually, if we mingle with our fellow-men, young and old—in cabin, mansion, office, shop, street—as opportunity offers and duty demands.

If we *mingle* with them,—if we are of them, a man among men. Not if we are patronizing to some and obsequious to others. Not if we are always conscious of official relations. Not if we encourage the idea in people's minds—or in our own—that we are somehow a different sort of being from themselves, so that they cannot feel entirely easy in our presence. If we be human and manly to begin with, the life of a Christian pastor will make us more human, more manly.

Last night, while meditating on this subject, I opened at random a volume of McNeill's "Sermons," to see what examples I could find of the spirit of humanity in the pulpit. I will give you the first passage that attracted my attention:

"'Lord, how are they increased that trouble me!' Are there not still some souls who sometimes come through a morning like that? As the days and years increase upon you,

my Christian friends, your skies are not brighter and your path is not lighter. You are going through, in your measure, the experience of this much-tried man who wrote the Psalms. Increase of years means for you, humanly speaking, increase of trouble, increase of sorrow.

> 'Though trouble springs not from the dust,
> Nor sorrow from the ground,
> Yet ills on ills by Heaven's decree
> In *your* estate are found.'

"Long ago you looked forward to the age to which you now have come, and you said, 'Ah! then my life's battle's by [past]. Then I'll have fought and won; then I'll have reached my kingdom.' Like a poor field-laborer who used to say, to cheer him in present toil and poverty, 'But, wife, we'll soon have the farm now.' That was his *summum bonum*. How you looked forward to yours! It was your day-star. 'When I reach forty—when I reach fifty—when I reach sixty—and my present raven locks "a sable silvered," how tranquil will all things be round about me then! Land ahead! I shall almost see the white cliffs of heaven right ahead. I shall feel that I am almost home, that I am almost there—only a few more tranquil days, and under sunlit or moonlit skies I shall drift across the harbor bar, and drop my anchor in Fair Havens at last.' And what has happened? 'Why,' you say, 'I never knew what trouble was till I came to fifty,'"—and so on.

The sermons of such a preacher are the best possible present-day illustrations of the spirit of humanity in Christian preaching.

But the preacher is not simply a popular speaker. He speaks to men as men; but he does this in more than the ordinary sense of the words. What are men? There is a realm of thought and of natural affection in which they move; but there is also a higher life that claims them as its subjects,—the life of conscience, the life of the spirit. Even now in the flesh every man's closest and most vital relation is with God in Christ. The realization of it is religion: "Our citizenship is in heaven." And here is the sole reason of the Christian preacher's appearance among his fellows. When the Baptist was born, his name was given him from heaven,—John, which

is, being interpreted, *Jehovah is gracious;* for it was to be the life-work of John the Baptist to declare that Christ and the kingdom of heaven were at hand. It is a name for every preacher of the Gospel; for he is sent forth as a bearer of the same evangel in its fulfilment: God is gracious, Christ is come, the kingdom of heaven is among you. His audience are not to him merely human minds and hearts, but human, redeemed, immortal *spirits*. He comes to speak to them of the things of the spirit. The place of meeting is not the town hall nor the lecture-room, but the house of the Lord. An invariable and appropriate accompaniment of his preaching is worship. Therefore, together with its humanity, there should likewise be an all-pervasive *spirituality* in the sermon.

This too is sympathy; and of the very noblest order. For is it not a fellow-feeling with men in that which is highest and best in their nature? Without it a man may indeed abound in generous affections; but he will fail immeasurably in his appreciation of those whom he loves. The love of souls, that spark of celestial fire, has not yet enkindled his sympathies. Suppose him to be a father. His children are very dear to him; all that he has is theirs; in their sufferings he suffers, and in their joys he is glad. But if he have an unspiritual mind, there is one great sphere of their life into which he cannot enter. When the Spirit of God touches their hearts, to waken penitence and prayer and hunger for righteousness, it is all nothing to their earthly father. They need not come to him: for bread he can give them only a stone.

But Christian sympathy does not waver and fail at the point of spiritual experience. It reaches up to that which is highest, and includes all. The preacher's spirit of humanity is also spirituality.

The lower sympathy is good in itself, but it is also good as the condition of something better. Here, as elsewhere, the law is: First that which is natural, afterward that which is spiritual. Approach men on all sides of their nature; become

"all things to all men," but let it be that you "may by all means save some." Do not even depreciate the sense of wit and humor. It is no unholy thing; it is a distinctively human emotion. Cowper's dislike of the preacher who would "court a grin," when he should "woo a soul," has been often approved by homiletic writers; and properly enough. But it would not have been amiss to say a word for the man who evokes a smile by some momentary and chastened play of wit, that it may help him to "woo a soul." Adjust yourself to the individual temperaments of men, and to their various tastes and prejudices, with the untaught art of love. But let it be done with no lower motive than to gain a hearing for those words of God whereby, as it is written, "man shall live." Put your whole human self into the word of God, and make it *your own word*, that you may the better impart it to others. Jesus was the Saviour of the body, ever ready to heal the diseased. But it was His ultimate object thus to make a way for Himself into the heart and spirit. It was a small thing for Him to feed five thousand men with the "meat that perisheth," if no prayer were thereby excited in their hearts for "that meat which endureth unto eternal life" (John vi.). It was a small thing for Him to open the blind eyes, unless He might thereby bring the true vision of God to men's souls (John ix.).

Will men listen to such discourse? Can we talk of the things of God, in the spirit of one who lives in daily contact with them, and gain a hearing? However this may be, necessity is laid upon us: it is of these things and in this spirit that we are bound to speak. But the humanity of the sermon will open a way in men's minds for its spirituality. And, chiefly, men are spirits, with spiritual needs and longings, with guilt on their consciences, with a desire (however little expressed) to know something of the Divine Power by which they live, with an abiding sense of accountability to God. If they have fallen so low as to be entirely satisfied with earthly things, the spell may be broken and their higher nature roused to self-

assertion. By no means may we regard them as wholly given up to worldliness and animalism. Are they incapable, for example, of unselfish patriotism? Let the right leader appear —a Judas Maccabæus, a William the Silent, a Garibaldi—and men will follow him in rags and blood; they will sacrifice property, personal ambitions, home, life itself, for their native land. Said Garibaldi to the Italians, in the crisis of their struggle for independence: "In return for the love you may show your country, I offer you hunger and thirst, cold, war, and death. Whoso accepts the terms, let him follow me." And an impassioned army followed him to victory and freedom.

But still deeper in the human soul lie the principles to which the Gospel makes its appeal. Religious man has always been and always will be; religious and capable of true piety and sonship to God. I have heard a Roman Catholic bishop lament the passing away of the "ages of faith." They will never pass away. And as a Christian preacher you are sent to men with that truth which only can fully satisfy their religious nature,—the revelation of God and the redemption of the world in Christ Jesus. When man ceases to be man, your office will become antiquated; not before.

One reason, indeed, for the lack of interest shown in preaching is that the preaching is often so *unspiritual.* Let a man speak from his conscience to the conscience in other men; let him stand before the people from Sunday to Sunday and really interpret to them the spiritual life, bringing it home to their faith and feeling, and declaring the treasures of wisdom and power in Christ, out of his own experience; and he will not fail of recognition. Some will turn away with indifference, some will wonder and turn away, and some will harden their hearts; but all will feel the touch of his power, and many will receive the Word of God gladly from his lips.

What brought the neglected multitudes of England to the preaching of Wesley? Did he flatter their vanity? Did he play the demagogue and foment a spirit of passionate discon-

tent with their social and industrial conditions? Did he offer them earthly advantages? Did he gratify their fancies? Was he witty or pathetic? None of these things. He alarmed and instructed the conscience. He showed the way of salvation in Christ. The theme of his preaching, like the principle of his personal conduct, was, "Holiness unto the Lord." If ever a man taught the doctrine which is according to godliness, Wesley did it continually. And it was to this that tens of thousands hearkened and responded.

Or take a very different example, from a more recent time. Where shall we find a greater moral intensity, a higher standard of feeling and conduct, a more ideal spiritual utterance, than in the sermons of Frederick Robertson? And did not rapt and eager congregations hang upon his words? Has not their influence, since his brief and troubled life ended, been one of the marvels of the modern pulpit?

Or, to take an example strikingly different from both these such were the devoutness and spirituality of John Summe. field, and so ethereal his appearance and speech withal, that his preaching has been described as seraphic rather than human. "Indeed, he not only prayed before he preached and after he preached,—for he went to the pulpit from his knees, and back to his knees from the pulpit,—but he seemed to be praying while he preached. Prayer was so much his breath that, as Gregory Nazianzen says of the true Christian, the breathing went on whatever he was doing, not hindering him, but necessary to him." And the churches in which he ministered were overcrowded with hearers.

Here is the secret of *unction*. Nowhere save in religious discourse does this strangely penetrating and subduing power make itself felt. Because it arises from the intermingling of sympathy with men and an affecting sense of the truth and the presence of God. It is tenderness and passion, "mingled tears and fire," but not this alone,—tenderness and passion and believing prayer. It is this that illumines the spirit and melts

the heart of both preacher and hearer as no other eloquence can do.

Therefore, with all our getting of rules and methods, and with all our gathering of materials, let us keep close in heart and spirit to Him from whom we receive our message, and to them that hear us. Said a plain-spoken Scotch parishioner: "Our first minister was a man, but he was not a minister; our second was a minister, but he was not a man; and the one we have at present is neither a man nor a minister." *Man* and *minister* is what every pulpit calls for.

Nothing could be easier than to show instances of powerful preaching that has been notably deficient in all formal respects; but it would not be easy to cite instances of truly effective preaching in which the vitalizing spirit of humanity and spirituality is lacking. Call to mind any of the great men of the pulpit, representing the widest dissimilarities of genius, culture, manner, theological views, outward circumstances,—such as Luther, Spurgeon, Liddon, Brooks, Simpson,—and in them all will be found, in different measures and proportions, these two elements of power. Take out the sympathy and the spiritual mind from their sermons, leaving all the rest; and how completely are they shorn of their strength!

The supreme example of powerful speech is that one Teacher of men in whose life the divine and the human, God and man, were fully manifested. For His words were a large and significant part of His life, an ever-increasing revelation of Himself. Why, then, should it not have been true that never had words like His, either as to humanity or spirituality, been spoken on earth? They were not theological terms, but the language of every-day life. They were not addressed to the accidental, but to that which is essential and universal in men,—to the common understanding, heart, and conscience. And in them all there was the heart-beat of love and sympathy, such as only the Son of man could feel.

But it has been well said that men cannot be brothers un-

less they have a Father in heaven. Their unity is in God. It was of Him that Jesus spoke continually, and out of a perfect realization of His holy presence, and of perfect oneness with His nature and will,—of Him, and of the infinitely precious human soul, of the kingdom of heaven, of eternal life and death. Listening to Jesus, we feel the body to be indeed but the outward organ of the soul, the visible the symbol of the invisible, and time a vanishing point in eternity.

One of His own great words explains it all: "The *Son of man* who is *in heaven*"

Read Dr. William M. Taylor's "Ministry of the Word," Dr. Stalker's "The Preacher and his Models," Spurgeon's "Lectures to my Students" (First Series), Arthur's "Tongue of Fire."

LECTURE XXIII

ORDER—REPETITION—SOME SPECIAL OCCASIONS

THE constantly recurring question, What shall I preach next Sunday? is properly a part of some such broader question as, What shall I preach this year? The breadwinner makes provision for the months and years; the housewife considers what she shall have for dinner to-day. The preacher is both breadwinner and housewife. How shall I select and arrange the themes of my preaching in a ministry of one, of two, of four years?—this is his larger thought.

The principle is that the whole truth into which the Spirit of truth has been given to guide him, as a disciple and minister of Christ, shall be taught the people, as their capacities may permit and their needs require. "Who then is the faithful and wise steward, whom his Lord shall set over His household, to give them their portion of food in due season?" (Luke xii. 42).

1. First of all, there must be some *order of pulpit ministrations*. What has already been said concerning order in successive prayer-meeting talks might be repeated with added emphasis here. As each discourse should be constructed according to some plan, so should the combination of discourses through any period of one's ministry. As it is well that the individual sermon should be a unity, so is it that the sermons of a whole pastoral term collectively should be a unity of unities. There is no more reason to expect success from

random choices in this part of our work than in any other. For here, as everywhere, order has a moral as well as an intellectual element: it means the right distribution and timely command of the forces at our disposal.

Christian preaching is, to a considerable extent, didactic: "I will give you shepherds according to Mine heart, which shall feed you with knowledge and understanding" (Jer. iii. 15). What would be thought of a teacher in the lecture-room who presented such topics as were easy for him to handle, or such as happened to come in his way, with no predetermined course of instruction? Now the systematic arrangement of topics cannot, for obvious reasons, be observed with the same exactness in the pulpit as in the lecture-room. But the conclusion by no means follows that it should not be observed at all. It is in this matter as in many others,—the preacher's task is peculiarly personal and difficult. But just as in his daily work he has more liberty than is enjoyed in most callings,—the hours not being divided off for him, with the duty of each prescribed,—and yet he is not thereby freed from the obligation of a systematic employment of time, so in the matter now under consideration. Called unto liberty, he must not use it as an occasion to the flesh, but in the service of love. The pastor's course of teaching will be a stream disturbed by many an unforeseen obstruction, and with many a short and sudden curve, but still preserving one general direction,—a stream, not an irregular overflow.

You will sometimes have the feeling, No permanent impression is made,—I have presented this and that, but have not thoroughly taught and impressed anything. Let this suggest the advantage of serial preaching. A revival of religion will offer a similar suggestion; for one of its secrets of success is that the same general subject is kept before the people from day to day. Why not apply this principle to the ordinary course of preaching? What great truth would you present more fully than can be done on any single occasion,—"The

Work of the Holy Spirit," "The Mutual Relations of Pastor and People," "Success and Failure in Life," "The Christian View of Business and Property"? Deliver not one, but several successive sermons on the subject. Or you may see fit to give a biographical series. You believe it would be an excellent thing if some representative Bible character—say, Samuel, Saul, David, Ahithophel, Jeremiah, Nehemiah, John the Baptist—could be shown to the people, in his faults and his virtues, in his limitations and his greatness, as these appear in the various events of his life, till the full moral impression of that one man should be made upon their minds. Or you may wish to set forth the significance of some period of Bible history,—such as that of the reign of David, or the establishment of the first Christian churches. Indeed, suitable themes for serial preaching are innumerable.

But do not imagine that the mere announcement of a series will awaken popular interest. The effect may be rather the opposite. It will depend largely on the subject. Often it may be better to let the series disclose itself, without preannouncement. In any event, your predominant motive must be, not attractiveness, but *impression*. Besides, you need not be sensitive about interruptions. If some outside topic demand attention, take it up: the rest of the series will probably not lose in interest in thus waiving its right of way.

Note, also, that the series, like the single sermon, is in more danger of running on too long than of stopping too soon. Often four or five sermons are enough.

And now what are some of the considerations that may properly influence the pastor in determining the order of pulpit themes?

(1) The contents of the teaching itself,—*Christian doctrine*. We may be sure that it is all needed. Not one truth of salvation is antiquated, nor ever will be. Not one is adapted to certain communities only: all are applicable to all. Look upon any congregation that can be gathered, and know that

the whole circle of doctrine as taught by our Lord personally, and by His Spirit in the hearts of His Apostles, concerning God and man—concerning sin, judgment, redemption, Christian experience and character—is what you are sent to teach and proclaim. Note the deficiencies in the subject-matter of your teaching, and endeavor to correct them. Above all, see that Christ Crucified is the great central truth whose light and power inform all the others and make them the power of God unto salvation to every believer.

(2) *Circumstances and outward conditions.* These often invite or even require recognition.

In the Lutheran and the Episcopal Church the Catholic usage is perpetuated of naming the Sundays of the year with reference to the great facts of redemption as accomplished in the life of our Lord, and to the Christian doctrine of the Trinity. The Scripture selections for each occasion are prescribed; and the original intention was that the text of the sermon should be chosen from the Gospel or the Epistle for the day. Thus the supreme Christian facts—the Advent, the Cross, the Resurrection, the Ascension, the Baptism of the Holy Spirit—and the supreme truth of the Divine Nature revealed as Father, Son, and Spirit, are presented to the people every year, and in the same general order. This arrangement is after the manner of the Old Testament and the synagogue rather than of the New Testament. It originated with those who proposed to put ecclesiastics rather than prophets into the pulpit. Still this Christian year is suggestive of the central position of our Lord's life and work and the New Testament revelation of God, in Christian teaching; and of the expediency of setting forth the truth according to some principle of orderly succession. Two seasons of the church year, Christmas and Easter, have won the attention and sympathy of the general Christian community, and thus afford special opportunities for preaching on the great events for which they stand.

The Lord's Supper sets forth in simple forms of sense the very heart of the Gospel. A sermon to the eye, it preaches Jesus Christ and Him crucified. Thus the administration of this sacrament affords the pulpit a periodical opportunity of declaring the essential truths of the Christian faith, and the duties inseparable from them. The life of Christ, atonement, reconciliation, the remission of sins, communion with Christ, the communion of saints, the new covenant, thanksgiving, self-sacrifice, consecration, the sacramental character of our natural life,—such are some of the themes for thought and speech at the table of our Lord.

It is also an appropriate occasion for the reception of members into the church; and this service calls for specific themes of preaching.

Again: human life, nature, God's providence, are so many continually opening books in the world around us; and, as interpreted by the Scriptures and by the Spirit of truth in the preacher's own heart, these too have a place in the pulpit. Suppose, for example, the occasion be that of the first sermon or the last in a pastoral charge: shall the preaching be altogether such as would be suited to any ordinary occasion? Or suppose that death has robbed the church of some of its best-beloved members; that some new field of usefulness has been opened in the neighborhood; that some public calamity has shocked the community; that the hard winter weather is pinching the poor and emphasizing the claims of brotherly kindness and charity; that the winter is over and gone, and the springtime, with all its spiritual suggestiveness, has appeared upon the earth; that the public mind is agitated by some grave social problem,—and no application of the truth is made to these newly arising circumstances and conditions: will not the pulpit so far be standing apart from the life of the people, instead of bringing to bear upon them all its regulative and sanctifying power?

The preacher's congregation live in this world—and so

should he. Not in his books, not in the realm of abstract ideas, not even in religious contemplation, so as to become insensible to his surroundings and his time. Like the prophets and apostles, he is to be at once of his time and above it. He is called indeed to bear witness to eternal and unchangeable truth; but he is to *bear witness*, and this means that he shall speak so as to be listened to, and so as to apply his testimony to the case in hand. While the Bible furnishes his theme, the newspaper may also be helpful in its place. Jesus found a word of instruction and warning in the killing of the Galileans by Pilate while they were offering sacrifices, and in the falling of the tower in Siloam (Luke xiii. 1–5).

(3) But it must be borne in mind that every man's real preaching is limited by *what he knows*, and that to know truly is to experience. *Quantum sumus scimus.* Suppose the theme which the circumstances call for should not take hold of the preacher's own heart; suppose this or that doctrine of Christianity should not have been elaborated in his own experience: how can he preach it? He may as a mere herald or messenger deliver a message which he does not understand; but how can a witness testify to anything which he himself has not seen and known?

The defect in this case is in the man. To this extent he is unqualified for his ministry. He *must* know. Let him seek a more perfect development of the Christian mind in himself. What is the truth which has not so entered into his experience as to make its utterance from his lips a word of power? What is the duty which has been so neglected as to cause him to feel like a half-hypocrite in urging it upon others? What are the passages of Scripture which, for personal reasons, he hesitates to preach from? Let him know that truth, do that duty, take that Scripture as food for his own inner life. The exceeding sinfulness of sin, the holy love of God, the atoning grace of Christ, the witness of the Spirit, patience, self-control, love to enemies, kindness at home, trust in Providence,—every Christian truth and precept should be wrought into his faith

and feeling and will. Has he not put off the old man and put on the new man, "which is being renewed unto knowledge after the image of Him that created him"? "Whatsoever things are true, . . . honorable, . . . just, . . . pure, . . . lovely, . . . of good report; if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think on these things."

You may also expect to find, however, that a subject will sometimes slip into your mind, make its appeal, decline to be set aside, waken the feeling that somehow you would like to preach it and ought to do so. For the time there is none like it, none so interesting, no rival. Very well; think it out and preach it, next Sunday, if you can.

Again, everything is not possible to everybody. By certain minds certain aspects of the common truth will be seen more clearly and assimilated more thoroughly than by others. As we are all men, not machines, so have we temperaments, capacities, experiences, which differ endlessly. Whence appear the prerequisites for special ministerial missions: Paul is sent to the Gentiles and Peter to the Jews; John becomes the interpreter of the inner life of Christ; James writes of good works rather than of faith and love. In such a man as Bishop Butler it was simple fidelity to the law of his own mind and his consequent mission to men that he should uniformly teach the deep, rational, philosophic aspects of the Christian faith. In such a man as George Whitefield, one of his contemporaries, it would have been unfaithfulness and folly to attempt it. When a friend asked Phillips Brooks which of his sermons he was going to preach in Westminster Abbey, "Sermon?" he answered, "*I have but one.*" Each man will do his most effective work along the line of his strongest convictions and deepest life. Let it be so; let each give according to that which he has; let him preach out of his own experience, poor as it may be, rather than out of the richest possible borrowed experiences. Only let not any man on whom a congregation is dependent for the ministration of the Gospel be hindered

and crippled by narrowness, ignorance, one-sidedness, or hobbies.

(4) *The people themselves.* This, after all, is the decisive consideration. Always is it to be remembered that we preach neither for the sake of a system of theology, nor for self-expression. These are means, and are good only as adaptable to their end,—the salvation of men. But it is quite possible to be more concerned about honoring and defending the truth than about saving those to whom we are sent. Therefore study people; know the souls before you. Know what they read; know their doubts, their besetting sins, their spiritual aspirations, their state of mind as influenced by circumstances and current events. Then preach the truth in such measures, in such proportions, in such forms, at such times, as may seem best suited to bring men to Christ and to build them up in the Christian life.

It would be interesting to note what subjects the people themselves would choose to hear preached from Sunday to Sunday, if the privilege of choosing were allowed them. Not always, we may be sure, those which they most needed. If so, "then is the offense of the cross ceased." What people wish to hear is not always what they need to hear. But in many cases it is. The healthy soul, like the healthy body, hungers for its *necessary* food. I have sometimes been requested to preach on certain subjects, when the motive seemed to be an intellectual curiosity rather than a spiritual craving. But oftener the request, I could not doubt, was the expression of a sincere desire for help in perplexity or comfort in trouble. As I try at this moment to recall the sermons I have been asked to re-preach, they all seem to have differed from the common run by being more spiritual, more consolatory, or more closely practical.

But the sympathetic and wise-hearted preacher will not wait for his congregation to make requests: he will learn their susceptibilities and needs, and devote himself constantly to

their service. He will prepare and preach sermons with specific reference to individuals; and not for their sakes alone, but also for the class, larger or smaller, represented by them. Let one example suffice. Here is a member of your congregation who is evidently interested in religion, who hears the Gospel gladly and "does many things," but for some reason hesitates to surrender himself fully to Christ. Is he "a disciple of Jesus, but secretly"? Is he one who would love God, but who somehow finds it hard to believe that God loves him? Preach to him, sermon after sermon, if necessary, with strong faith in God that you may remove his difficulties, strengthen his wavering will, and lead him to a whole-hearted acknowledgment of his Lord. Those sermons may be the fit instrument for bringing not only him, but others of whom you may or may not know, into that kingdom of God about the threshold of which they are lingering. When a sturdy Scotchman wrote that he had been hit by a random shot from the pulpit of the Church of the Strangers in New York City, a member of the pastor's family, who was familiar with his preaching habits, replied: "Not 'a random shot,' my good brother; he knew somebody like you and was aiming at him. He always preached from his own pulpit at some particular person in the audience. When preaching to a strange audience he preached at himself. Somebody was always hit. He wasted no ammunition shooting in the air with both eyes shut."

Now you are ready to ask, What sort of orderly course of preaching is that which is to be determined by so many and such various considerations? It is what I have indicated from the outset,—all the more real, because spiritual and vital rather than intellectual or mechanical. It is such as we may reasonably believe an apostle would have followed.

2. Another point which may be best considered in this connection is the *repetition of sermons.*

The same subject will be needed by the congregation again

and again: shall we, then, repeat a sermon that has been recently given? The question usually seems to turn upon the repetition of the text. It is easily settled in many cases by those preachers whose sermonizing is uniformly topical. Just so the text is not the same (which is easily managed), they avail themselves of the liberty of presenting the same line of thought, either wholly or in part, over and over. The people, likewise, are inclined to identify the repetition of a text with the repetition of the sermon. It is the cases in which the text is so interwrought with the sermon as to make it impracticable to separate them—the sermon being not simply on or from the text, but truly *out of it*—that generally suggest the inquiry.

The answer is simple enough. It will not often be expedient to repeat a sermon within a few weeks or months after its first delivery. The same truth will be more likely to be effectual if put into some other form. But if a true reason for repeating appear, not a false or a pretended reason,—originating in indolence, for example,—let it be done, without any attempt at concealment, and without sensitiveness or hesitation.

A more practical question to many preachers is the repetition of the sermon to different congregations. Here we come upon an undoubted evil,—an abuse of what is in itself a happy opportunity. Sermons are re-preached apparently without any limit save that of place. Hence it comes to pass that many ministers do not prepare a dozen new sermons in a year. "The truth is the same," they argue, "and it saves so much time and toil to utilize the old sermon on every possible occasion." The genial Bishop Clark of Rhode Island, speaking of his lecturing days, says: "I had one lecture that I delivered three hundred and fifty times, and it became so familiar at last that I could go through with it automatically, and think about something else all the time." But the cost of such economy of time, in the case of the preacher, is too great,—the habit of

self-indulgence and the arrest of mental development. And the result in the preaching will by no means be merely negative. The old, reiterated sermon is not delivered with as good effect as when it was fresh and vital, and did express the best that was in the preacher's mind and heart at the time. So the "dead line" is drawn; the preacher falls in the estimation of the people, and perhaps complains of it,—gently or loudly, according to his nature,—instead of raising his lamentation over the actual evil, the death of his pulpit.

Nevertheless, I am far from advising that a bonfire be made annually, or at any time, of all one's sermon manuscripts. Some, doubtless, had as well take the form of ashes. Such as were made in low moods, or because it had to be done, may better be out of the way. It might have been still better had they never come into existence. But a sermon that represents the best thought and experience of a true man living in the communion of the Holy Spirit, at any time in his ministry, will contain something that does not deserve to be destroyed. Keep them—these children of your heart and brain—and let them serve you as they ought.

I find an interesting confession in the life of Wesley, an extract from his journal:

"September 1. I went to Tiverton. I was musing here on what I heard a good man say long since: 'Once in seven years I burn up all my sermons; for it is a shame if I cannot write better sermons now than I could seven years ago.' Whatever others can do, I really cannot. I cannot write a better sermon on 'The Good Steward' than I did seven years ago; I cannot write a better on 'The Great Assize' than I did twenty years ago; nay, I know not that I can write a better on 'The Circumcision of the Heart' than I did five and forty years ago."

In the case of writers the first stroke is sometimes the finest,—the first book the most attractive and influential; perhaps because it represents freshly and vividly the thought that

through the whole previous life has struggled for expression. William Cullen Bryant's "Thanatopsis," written at the age of eighteen, will not suffer in comparison with any of his later productions. John Calvin published his first edition of the "Institutes of the Christian Religion" at the age of twenty-six. What, then, is the peculiarity of homiletic productions which renders them comparatively worthless after the lapse of one or more years?

Here and there in your treasury of sermons will be one that fits both your mind and tongue most happily. It seems to mean more than the generality of your discourses; it expresses more that you wish to tell, and makes a deeper impression, apparently, on the congregation. Shall it be burned, or laid aside, or remodeled, or made use of only in case of the greatest necessity, just because it has been used before? This would be an extremely unwise economy of means and resources. Would any one suppose it to have been to the advantage of the cause of religion that Simpson's sermon on "The Christian Ministry" (Acts xx. 24), or Marvin's on "Christ and the Church" (Eph. v. 22–33), should have been delivered only on one or two occasions? Similarly Dr. E. D. Griffin's sermon on "The Worth of the Soul" was preached nearly a hundred times; but it was asked for again and again, and was probably not delivered once too often.

If an old sermon be not too strait for your present preaching self,—containing just what you would now say on the subject,—what would be gained by either its destruction or its reconstruction? But this will not very often be so. In all ordinary cases the old sermon must be made a new sermon,—recast, or at least retouched and revivified. Then it may prove a more effective instrument in your hand than if it were entirely new.

3. We must pass on now to consider some *special themes and occasions* of our ministry in the congregation.

(1) *Funeral sermons* are not nearly so common as formerly.

Even in the case of the most saintly and useful Christians usually no text is taken, no subject discussed. An address, or perhaps remarks by two or more friends, takes the place of the sermon; and at many funerals the devotional services are all.

So far as the omission of sermonic form and elaborateness are concerned, this change of custom may be regarded as a gain. So far as it leaves the minister at liberty to speak of the deceased or not, or to say little or more, as may seem expedient, there is greater gain. But if the tendency be toward a mere decent ceremony, unvitalized by the truth and aiming at no benefit to the congregation, it is not to be commended, but deplored. The house of mourning is hardly the place for preaching, in the stricter sense of the term; but surely it is not an unfit place for the Gospel,—for the spoken word of Christian warning, instruction, consolation, hope. It requires delicacy of perception, tact, sympathy, and faithfulness to speak such a word; but are these qualities beyond our reach? "The Lord God hath given me the tongue of them that are taught, that I should know how to sustain with words him that is weary."

The point of greatest embarrassment is where we speak directly of the deceased. Nowhere perhaps is the word of preaching more likely to fail in fidelity and truth. Has it not always been so? Each of us is probably ready, from his own limited observation, to confirm the scholarly statement of Van Oosterzee: "One has only to cast a hurried glance upon this part of theological literature, from Ambrose to the time of Masillon and later, in order to discover how much that is human, in the less favorable sense of the word, has in this domain cast a blot upon the reputation of sacred eloquence." The funeral oration is not the place for criticism, which is an exposition of faults as well as virtues. Therefore this is never offered. On the other hand, panegyric is painfully distasteful to the well-instructed Christian mind; and yet this is by no means uncommon. Here will be a danger, in paying the tribute

of Christian affection to our departed brethren, and commending their example to the living. We must learn to speak the truth in wisdom and love, in the simplicity of Christ. I suppose that David spoke as poet and sorrowing personal friend, rather than as a prophet of God, in that incomparably beautiful elegy: "Thy glory, O Israel, is slain upon thy high places! . . . Saul and Jonathan were lovely and pleasant in their lives, and in their death they were not divided" (2 Sam. i. 19–27).

But what shall we say of those who have lived and died as men and women of the world, making no profession of faith in Christ? Shall we assure their friends and acquaintances that they have entered into everlasting life? Yes, if that will accord with our ordinary pulpit teaching from Sunday to Sunday. If not, it is weakness and untruthfulness to offer such an assurance now. Make no address at all; or, if you speak, let it be without reference to the deceased. Leave them in the hands of Him who made them, and hold your peace. Whatever your hopes or fears, it is a time to be silent. If this be your rule, it will cause no pain to the bereaved; and especially if, even in the case of faithful Christians, your remarks are not panegyrical or oracular, but brief, simple, hopeful, Christian.

The spirit of the accompanying prayer should harmonize with that of the address. Let it be for the living,—a *prayer;* and, if part of it be occupied with giving thanks for the life of the deceased,—as will often be appropriate,—let this be a true and Godward thanksgiving, and not degenerate into a eulogistic description of virtues, either fancied or real.

(2) The *missionary work of the church* will need to be definitely explained and emphasized. Here the case is extremely plain. The church is constitutionally aggressive. It was not sent into the world to go softly and keep the peace, but to conquer the world unto Christ. It is for mankind, for the universal extension of the kingdom of God. In Abraham all

the families of the earth were to be blessed. The temple was to be a house of prayer for all nations. The Christ was to be not only the glory of Israel, but "a light to lighten the Gentiles." And when any particular church dares to answer, "No; I will use my judgment as to which nations and countries shall have this word of salvation,"—she is putting herself into direct antagonism to the declared purpose of her Lord. She is even denying the very fundamental principles of true religion as stated and interpreted by Him: "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy strength, and with all thy mind, and thy neighbor as thyself."

The duty of the pulpit in this matter will not be fulfilled by an occasional missionary sermon. The missionary idea—which is, in other words, the idea of the *mission* of the church—must be so appropriated in the preacher's personal experience that its tone may be heard and its distincter expressions be given continually in his ministry.

Read "The Great Commission," by Dr. John Harris, "Foreign Missions after a Century," by Dr. J. S. Dennis, "Modern Missions: Their Evidential Value" (Cole Lectures for 1896), by Bishop C. B. Galloway, "The Personal Life of David Livingstone," by Dr. William G. Blaikie, "The Autobiography of John G. Paton."

LECTURE XXIV

SOCIAL THEMES

UNDER this title I would group certain ethical themes that arise more or less directly out of social relations. The preacher's obligation to study them is immediate and urgent. It would be hard to overestimate the extent to which they involve the welfare of men, both now and hereafter. But hardly can they be called by way of distinction "questions of the day"; for in one form or another they have challenged the attention of teachers, benefactors, and preachers in all ages.

I think the pulpits with which I am most familiar have not fully appreciated these subjects.

1. **Temperance.**—This, indeed, is first of all a personal matter,—temperance a duty to one's self, intemperance a violation of the laws of God in one's own body. Here the preacher's opportunity is preëminent, and his responsibility proportionately great; for nearly all that the temperance lecture may contain is open to him, while his position calls him to emphasize the *duty* and the *sin*. What texts he may take! —"Know ye not that ye are a temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you? If any man destroyeth the temple of God, him shall God destroy"; "Let not sin therefore reign in your mortal body, that ye should obey the lusts thereof"; "Nor drunkards . . . shall inherit the kingdom of God"; "Glorify God therefore in your body."

But intemperance is a sin whose social effects are conspicuously disastrous. It wages an unceasing war against society. Domestic misery, hereditary disease, pauperism, dissension, murder, are its proper fruits. Alike in the halls of legislation and in the city slums, everywhere, it stands forth, the enemy of all reform, the cherished ally of every vice and crime. And on the other hand, the efforts to suppress intemperance are made largely through organized agencies,—through legislation and voluntary societies.

Undoubtedly the Christian preacher should feel hearty sympathy with these temperance agencies. To offer the plea that he cannot approve all their methods would be irrelevant. Can he approve all ecclesiastical methods? It is the work and the object that demand his recognition and support. If, indeed, only one available method of accomplishing the work can be shown, his encouragement of the work will carry with it the encouragement of the method.

The day is coming when the saloon, with its appalling debauchery and crime, will be looked back upon pitifully as one of the evils of an imperfect civilization. Though the most terrible of all these evils, it has the peculiarity also of being easily curable. It may be voted out of existence. The ballots of church-members could sound its death-knell to-morrow. That it should have been endured as it was by the sovereign people of our land will one day be matter of unfeigned astonishment. That Christian men should have regarded it with encouragement, or even with indifference, will be well-nigh incredible. That day will come. Just when and how none can tell. But shall we not be numbered with those who are hastening it on, according to the will of God? Make your lifetime contribution, as a minister of Christ's holy evangel, to the truly Christian cause of temperance.

2. **Pauperism.**—All through the Scriptures the duty of almsgiving is inculcated. The unreaped corners of the field (Lev. xix. 9), the forgotten sheaf (Deut. xxiv. 19), and the

ungleaned olive-trees and vineyards (Deut. xxiv. 20, 21) in the land of Israel, were a perpetual object-lesson of kindness toward the needy brother. Indiscriminate charity, indeed,—scattering alms thoughtlessly to whosoever applies,—is not taught. For in such precepts as "Give to him that asketh thee," and "Sell that thou hast, and give to the poor," it is the principle of benevolence that is enforced, rather than a universally applicable form.

Now let us turn to the teachings of experience. We may do good by our alms-deeds; or we may do harm. If there be helplessness, through physical or mental disability,—as in the case of children, the aged, the diseased, the crippled, the feeble-minded,—our duty is plain: it is the case of the man in the parable who fell among robbers and was left wounded and half dead. But if we have reason to believe that our gifts will be spent on the gratification of depraved appetites, or will destroy the incentives to labor, or will weaken all manly resolution, love to our neighbor will prompt the withholding of the hand. In order that we may do nothing? On the contrary, for a work more difficult and requiring more self-sacrifice,—for implanting principles and wakening aspirations. And this requires personal acquaintance, guidance, friendliness. Are these mightier than money? As much mightier as a person is greater than the contents of a pocket-book. The imperative need is "not alms, but a friend."

The work of the church is character-building, the making of men: its charitable help must be so given as to promote self-help, and not to enfeeble and pauperize its subjects.

The economics of the apostle Paul's Christian discipline will never be invalidated: "For even when we were with you, this we commanded you, If any will not work, neither let him eat" (2 Thess. iii. 10). Almsgiving is a sweet and blessed privilege, no less a privilege now than when Jesus healed the blind beggar, and delivered the parable of the rich man and Lazarus. But it is often hard to do good, even

when it seems easiest; and the Christian preacher is also an expositor, a scribe of the kingdom of heaven. Therefore, while stirring the hearts of men to benevolence, he must also be able to point out to them, according to the circumstances of his own times, the means and methods.

3. **Trade.**—The immense extension of traffic, circulating through every neighborhood, in the most intricate and yet effective manner, and developing into world-wide commerce, is helping to realize the divine intention of universal brotherhood in the human race. Ten thousand hands have wrought in many regions of the earth to procure the material necessaries and comforts which each of us enjoys in any one day of his life. In return we make our little contribution of labor; and its products likewise are distributed far and wide. Great are the opportunites for good of the exchangers, the middlemen, who carry on this circulation of wealth from hand to hand all over the earth; great, in like manner, is their opportunity for evil influence. Perplexing combinations arise, in which the moral judgment may easily find itself at fault. There are many temptations to falsehood, dishonesty, covetousness.

So commerce, in its design so rich in blessings, is continually perverted into a curse. The noble steamship sailing from Christian England or from Christian America to the unhappy millions of the East is laden not only with food for the hungry, but with opium, or rum, or evil men, to corrupt and destroy the weaker race.

It would be well if we could have more such sermons as that of Horace Bushnell on "The Christian in Trade" (in "Sermons on Living Subjects"), or Dr. Chalmers's series of "Discourses on the Application of Christianity to the Commercial and Ordinary Affairs of Life." For in every thickly settled community the preacher has to deal from the moral point of view with this question. Probably the most prominent members of his church are tradesmen, and much of the

church money comes through mercantile operations. Are the merchants of his congregation dealing in goods that destroy the bodies and the souls of men? What laws do they observe in business,—the laws of Christ, or the customs of the world? Misrepresentation of goods, taking advantage of the ignorance or the necessity of customers, extortion, selling on the Sabbath, gambling in stocks and provisions,—these things cannot be done in the spirit of faith and brotherhood; they are altogether evil, and must be faithfully exposed and rebuked. Not, indeed, with wild and undiscriminating denunciation, not with irritation of feeling; calmly and on a solid basis of fact, reason, conscience, the Word of God.

And for positive doctrine let us teach men that trade is of God; that, if the merchant have chosen his place rightly, it is the place whereunto he has been divinely appointed; that he may do and must do his work, as truly as the Christian minister or the foreign missionary, in Christ's name; that, both directly by the transfer of goods and indirectly by a Christian use of his gains, the work he is doing is no mammon-worship, but a ministration to human need. If he accept this truth, the surrender of his untruth and idolatries will not leave him empty-hearted: he will have deeper inspirations and worthier aims; he will be doing the work of the kingdom of God.

4. **Government.**—From the days of the prophets of Israel till now the preacher of religion has found himself in important and delicate relations with the civil government. It was here the Pharisees laid their choicest snare for our Lord (Matt. xxii. 17); and here finally they founded the charge on which His condemnation was secured (John xix. 12). It is not enough to say, "We must have no political preaching." None, certainly, in behalf of political parties, and none in support of mere political measures. But what application of moral law shall the preacher make to civil law,—to that stupendous social organization under which all others, even ecclesiastical societies, exist? The question requires more than a negative answer.

Government is universal. Every man is born into some tribe or nation. Its power in all earthly relations is supreme. The state is *sovereign;* every man's property, liberty, life, is in its hands. Is government, then, of God? Most assuredly; and not only so, but its highest end is moral (Rom. xiii. 1–8). Even Aristotle, without the light of the Gospel, could see that "a state truly deserving the name must be governed by such wholesome laws as to place a happy and virtuous life within the reach of all its citizens, and thus, by cultivating the better parts of men, raise them in the scale of being." The government deserves from its citizens a cheerful and loyal obedience: disloyalty, anarchy, lynching, are assaults on the very foundations of society. Forms of government—from the unlimited monarchy up to the pure democracy—are indeed of human wisdom and appointment. With them the preacher, as such, has nothing to do. But he cannot follow the example of our Lord and of His prophets and apostles without proclaiming the divine origin and authority of civil government. The better the Christian, the truer the citizen and the nobler the patriot.

Suppose, now, the laws of the land or their administration, either through omission or commission, should be immoral. Suppose, for example, the authors of obscene literature should be permitted to publish their filthy imaginations and send them through the mails, to defile the youth of the country; suppose lotteries should be in operation under legal sanction; suppose the government should license the drinking-saloon, and thus help to perpetuate the crimes and woes of intemperance; suppose a municipal administration, through bribery and corruption, should wink at the violation of the law enacted for the moral protection of the community,—must the pulpits be silent? The men who are filling their pockets out of the vices and miseries of their fellows, fattening off their ruin, will hasten to say, "Yes; preach the Gospel, sing and pray, and let politics alone." Some timid, trouble-hating Christians will join in

the request. But the Word of God to His prophet-preachers has always been, "To whomsoever I shall send thee thou shalt go, and whatsoever I shall command thee thou shalt speak." Be sure of your ground, be sure of your spirit, have no hobbies, do not fight as one that beateth the air, speak the truth in love—but *speak it.* How can you preach the Gospel—if by this great word is meant the revelation of God in Christ—and let immorality alone? If some men have misnamed either morality or immorality *politics*, it is not for the teacher of religion to fall into such confusion of ideas. Christianity is not narrower in its sphere than the whole moral life of man. It has to do with the state no less truly than with the family. It must be applied not only to individuals, but to the organized life of society in all its forms. Doubtless there is danger of political preaching; but the danger of a time-serving, or a fastidious, or a churchy, or an ethically feeble ministration of the Gospel is considerably greater.

5. **Industrial Conditions and Movements.**—Here and there appears a rich man; but the mass of mankind live from hand to mouth, and are very poor. The industrial conditions under which their labor is performed are, in many cases, oppressive and severe. Not so severe as formerly. The course of legislation among English-speaking people, for more than half a century, has been directed steadily in their favor,—on such subjects, for example, as child-labor, employers' liability, sanitation, inspection of mines, debt, education. Their employers are somewhat more disposed to look upon them in their true character as men, not simply as "hands." Their material and educational advantages are many degrees greater than in the last century, and the average of life is longer. But on the other hand, with increasing intelligence, their needs, aspirations, and demands have proportionally increased.

Besides, the very progress of discovery and invention, with its consequent increase of wealth in the hands of all classes of the community, has incidentally wrought certain serious disad-

vantages to the poor. The thoroughgoing application of the principle of division of labor, restricting each man's operations to a few simple tasks, renders the workman comparatively helpless when thrown out of employment. Through incompetent management or unforeseen disaster, failures and panics occur. From these, among other causes, arise destitution, tramps, insurrections of labor. So we have the conflict between wages and profits, between the laborer and the employer. Many social and industrial theories are in the air,—some promulgated by self-seekers, and some by unselfish idealists; much good work, and much that is evil and damaging, is going on. Amid it all vast fortunes are multiplying, and side by side with them abject poverty is persisting in the land.

You will have to read volumes, instead of half a score of sentences, to see and appreciate the situation as a Christian minister should. If I may put you in the right line of inquiry by calling attention to a few salient points, I shall be satisfied.

(1) *The church has not done what she could for the toiling masses in their effort to better their condition.* What love did the Church of England show them, with all her wealth and national influence, three quarters of a century ago, when "infants five years old were allowed to work in the cotton factories from five in the morning until eight at night"; when, in the coal-mines of Lancashire and Yorkshire, "the forms of women and girls were crippled into every distortion by the weights of coal they had to carry, and their moral degradation was akin to their physical"; when "the brutalities inflicted on juvenile labor were officially stigmatized as too terrible for description"? To what extent are the churches of our own country fulfilling the law of Christ toward the toiling and suffering poor? It is stated, on what seems to be good authority, that the neglect of the church and its ordinances is increasing among the wage-workers, and in this class only. It is unquestionable that vast multitudes of them, both in city and in country, are habitual absentees from the preaching of the

Gospel. Even that Christian denomination which has won the high encomium of being "the church of the people" must acknowledge that the common people do not find their way to her chapels and hear her preachers as once they did. Why is it? Is such failure inevitable?

Let the Salvation Army bear witness. Criticise its methods, if you will, but hear its answer. It has done a work beside which the gathering of respectable wage-workers into the church would seem to be easy. Its chosen parish has been the slum, its special objects of effort the outcast and the criminal. Beginning with one man, poor in purse, feeble in health, without the sympathy of the church of which he was a member, in twenty years it has so extended its power and influence as to number the attendants upon its meetings by millions. Let its refuges and lodging-houses, the food it gives, the baths it provides, the work it supplies, the ungloved hand it offers to the leprous bodies and souls of men, the Christ-like heart that explains all,—let these speak, and let us sit at its feet and learn what it is to love our brother-man for whom Christ died.

(2) Nevertheless Christian churches have done far more, directly and indirectly, than any other organization in this line of work. From the beginning of the Gospel they have been the great power that makes for human brotherhood. And however the churches may have come short, it is true that *Christianity is at the heart of all true social advancement and reform.* Even those who in their blindness reject the Christian faith are largely indebted to it for that growth of altruism, or neighborliness, which has made social improvement possible in Christendom.

The Author and Object of our faith is the Son of man. To Him no hope or fear of the human soul, no joy or pain, no interest, is foreign. "He is not ashamed to call them brethren." Before going forth as the Teacher of mankind, His occupation was that of a Galilean wood-worker. "He knew what was in

man"; and He died for the world's redemption. What have we in His teachings? No mad crusade against the rights of property, but certainly much concerning its duties. No word against the institution of civil government, but the recognition of its true source and significance (John xix. 11). Neither has Jesus put the slightest barrier in the way of such governmental regulation of property rights as may be demanded by the general good. Did Jesus teach self-love? Yes; but coördinate with it in authority, neighborliness, love to others. One God and Father in heaven; one neighborhood and fraternity of men on earth; the infinite worth of even the unworthiest human soul; the sacredness of the body as the organ of a spiritual being; wealth a solemn trust, to be discharged with equal good will toward ourselves and toward our fellowmen, under the one Owner and Lord; poverty, like any other affliction, glorified with heavenly consolations and promises; service the true nobility, the great and gifted becoming, more than any others, the servants of all; Himself the supreme Example, the serving King, who "came not to be ministered to, but to minister, and to give His life a ransom for many,"—these are His teachings, and this was His life. What influence were they sent into the world to exert? What effects, as a matter of fact, have they produced in the world even until now?

The older political economy set forth the principle of competition as necessarily dominant in the industrial world. As if, in this sphere, the one supreme law is and must be, Thou shalt love thyself! Moreover, we were told that it is best for the industrial interests of the community, as a whole, that this should be so. But the incompleteness of this doctrine has been clearly shown. Unrestricted competition means unrestricted ruin to very many of our race. Besides, men do not act from self-interest alone in any sphere of life. There is another equally fundamental principle,—regard for others. And these two principles are not contrary the one to the other; both are necessary to the well-being of society. So not only

has legislation undertaken to help the classes that are too feeble to compete, but the great economic force of *coöperation* has come to be recognized side by side with competition. But what is this? Only an application of the law of Christ: "Thou shalt love thy *neighbor* as *thyself*." Only an unconscious recognition of the fact that in business and industry, as in the whole of human life, the Lord Jesus Christ is King.

"Fraternity," says Rae, in his "Contemporary Socialism," "is undoubtedly a Christian idea, come into the world with Christ, spread abroad in it by Christian agencies, and belonging to the ideal that hovers perpetually over Christian society. It has already produced social changes of immense consequence, and has force in it, we cannot doubt, to produce many more in the future." It is sober truth to affirm that the solution of the labor problem, being essentially moral, is to be found in the kingdom of God; and that the one word that expresses it best is *the Cross of Christ.*

(3) So *the pulpit has its mission of sympathy and direction to both individual and organized effort in behalf of the laboring poor.* Namely, it has Jesus to preach,—the doctrine, the life, the person of the Son of man, in all their manifold applications to the life and work of mankind.

(4) And *to better the condition of the poor, physically, intellectually, and morally, is to hasten the coming of the kingdom of heaven upon earth.* Everywhere in nature and in humanity the lower is preparatory to the higher. The cleansing of poison from the blood is a step toward the sanctification of the soul. The school-house is on the way to the church. Under what terrible obstructions must Christian character develop in many of the homes, neighborhoods, and work-places of the poor! True, the opposite extreme of the social scale, with its enormous accumulations of wealth, and its multiplied luxuries, is also sadly unfavorable to the Christian life. "Verily I say unto you, It is hard for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of heaven." Unhappily the rich do not always hear from the

pulpit the truth they need: they, too, are neglected. But the greater and more hopeful problem is that of the toiling poor. Houses large enough for the demands of health and decency; more sunshine and fresh air; purer physical surroundings; less dreariness and drudgery; more knowledge; opportunities for the children, entirely irresponsible for their situation, to get a fair start in life; all possible encouragement to self-reliance and self-help,—these are not, indeed, the very kingdom of God, but they are the outer provinces of it, the preparation of the way of the Lord. The signs that Messiah had come in the days of old were twofold: beneficent physical wonders and the preaching of the Gospel to the poor (Matt. xi. 5). The same are now, and doubtless always will be, the signs of the coming kingdom.

It is the idea of ecclesiastical organization for this complete Christian service to men, in their lower as well as their higher interests, that the recently developed "institutional church" stands for.

Such are some of the social topics that will claim a place, as occasion may suggest, in your teaching. Others will readily occur to you: e.g., the *family*, the *school*, *amusements*, *justice and kindness to animals*, and so on. Inform yourselves on them all; show indifference to none; rightly divide the word of truth, and make full proof here of your ministry.

To excuse ourselves from taking interest, personal and ministerial, in the social relations of men, on the ground that our work is the saving of individual souls, would be to mistake our commission. We are sent to proclaim the kingdom of God; and surely this implies the Christianizing of all human relations, pursuits, and institutions,—the family, the state, trade, industry, amusements, all.

Besides, the two objects may best be attained together,—the salvation of the individual and the Christian reconstruction of society. They are promotive of each other. Why should General Booth give so much thought and labor to a scheme

for the physical improvement of the crushed and degraded poor of England? Why not confine his attention strictly to revival meetings among them? He has told us the reason: "No doubt it is good for men to climb unaided out of the whirlpool on to the rock of deliverance in the very presence of the temptations that have hitherto mastered them. But, alas! with many this seems to be utterly impossible. . . . My only hope for the permanent deliverance of mankind from misery, either in this world or the next, is the regeneration or remaking of the individual by the power of the Holy Ghost through Jesus Christ. But in providing for the relief of temporal misery, I reckon that I am only making it easy where it is now difficult, and possible where it is now all but impossible, for men and women to find their way to the Cross of our Lord Jesus Christ."

To what instrumentality has been committed chiefly the evangelizing of the world? To converted souls, the salt of the earth, the light of the world. On the other hand, what is the most conspicuous barrier in the way of access to unconverted souls, and the most conspicuous danger to the newly converted? Unchristian surroundings. One of the best means of replacing sinful amusements with healthful recreations, of closing the saloon, of making the conditions of life easier for the poor, is to get souls converted. The renewed heart will create for itself a new world. True; and one of the best means of getting souls converted is to displace sinful amusements, to close the saloon, to make the conditions of life easier for the poor. The new world will be very favorable to the renewal of the heart. Between the man and his environment there is perpetual interaction.

Read "The Temperance Movement," by the Hon. H. W. Blair, "The Temperance Century," by the Rev. W. F. Crafts, "The New Era," by Dr. Josiah Strong, "Ruling Ideas of the Present Age," by Dr. Washington Gladden, "Christians and the Theater," by Dr. J. M. Buckley, "Better Not," by Bishop J. H. Vincent.

LECTURE XXV

THE PREACHER BEFORE THE CHILDREN

I PROPOSE to speak to you to-day about your ministry to the young people.

I. **The Opportunity.**

It is not that of the parent. It is not the opportunity of speaking a timely word to the children of your charge individually, at their homes and elsewhere. Nor is it that of an instructor of catechumens. It is a special opportunity of teaching and preaching in the congregation, that we have to consider.

Just a word concerning two incidental advantages in this ministration to children.

It will react most favorably upon you as a preacher. We presume upon the conscientious respectfulness of our grown-up hearers. They will listen to much that does not interest them—and are constantly required to do so. They will endure sermons that are feebly and coldly read in their presence. They will probably not laugh or stare at the performances of the would-be orator. But with the young people—at least with the "little ones"—the case is considerably different. Address them obscurely, or in a monotone, or in a scream, or with prosaic attempts at flights of imagination,—and you will not only fail to hold their attention, but will plainly see that you have failed. You must have something to say, and must say it simply, naturally, earnestly, or not get a hearing. But

these are necessary qualities in all really successful preaching. Learn to interest the young, and you are pretty certain not to prove uninteresting to anybody. In a word, we can stand before no congregation that is likely to be as helpful to us homiletically as a congregation of children.

Besides, to serve the child will give you an open way, as nothing else can, to the heart of the parent,—of the father as well as the mother, of outsiders as well as church-members, of the most highly cultivated and the least instructed. This will always be so; it is not an accident, but a law of the parental nature. Whatever is done toward the child, either of kindness or injury, is done toward the parent: in the oneness of love they are one. No; such a statement is inadequate: the kindness is strangely sweetened and the injury embittered when they come to the parent through the child.

Said the mother of a young preacher, bidding him good-by as he left home for the church in which his ordination to the Christian ministry was to take place: "You are going to be ordained to-day, and you will be told your duty by those who know it far better than I do; but I wish you to remember one thing which perhaps they may not tell you,—remember that whenever you lay your hand on a child's head you are laying it on its mother's heart."

But our concern is chiefly with the young people themselves.

They constitute about one half the whole number of our hearers.

Their possibilities of Christian character and usefulness are greater than those of any other class of persons. They have lost less time. It may be said that the conversion of a child is not so striking a sign of divine power as the conversion of an adult; but the outcome, both possible and probable, is greater. Bad habits have not so marred the nature as to induce infirmities and dangers that will persist unto the end of life. Terrible is it for any soul, converted or unconverted, to have formed a bad habit; for, though the habit be subdued,

the tendency to reassert itself remains. In the child's case a freer nature and a whole life may be given to God. Certain common and formidable obstacles to the truth in the heart of an adult do not exist to the same extent, and sometimes not at all, in the child-heart,—such as pride, sensuality, unbelief, prejudice, false shame, worldliness. Ideas and imaginings have not become convictions; dispositions, good or bad, have not yet hardened into character. And surely to lay out our strength on the formed mind and neglect the mind that is just forming, is madness.

One wide and effectual door of access to the children is the Sunday-school. Think of its million teachers and eight million scholars in our land. Six miles from where we are now assembled the first feeble beginning was made,—by Francis Asbury, in the house of Thomas Crenshaw, in the year 1786. A time-stained volume which I had in my hand to-day, "Minutes of the Methodist Conferences Held in America from 1773 to 1794 Inclusive," in its record of Conference proceedings for the year 1790, has the following answer to a question as to what shall be done for the instruction of poor children: "Let us labor, as the heart and soul of one man, to establish Sunday-schools in or near the places of public worship." About the same time such schools appeared, under various denominational auspices, in different parts of the country,—apparently quite unconnected with one another, save in their common origin in the great Sunday-school movement which had recently begun in England.

What is the true conception of this great institution and its work? It is the church discipling the children. These million teachers are laymen and women; but the chief teacher, in every case, bearing this relation both to them and their scholars, is the pastor under whose care the school is conducted. So the pastor's relation to the school is unmistakable: the leadership of the work is in his hands. It is his responsibility, his opportunity.

What shall we say concerning the attendance of Sunday-school children upon preaching and public worship? Many of them may be seen returning from church while their elders are going thither; and their absence from the congregation has caused much anxiety and elicited searching inquiries, on the part of thoughtful Christian men, as to the soundness of our present-day methods. Now let us see. It will not do to say that the children returning from Sunday-school have not been in attendance upon the worship of God and the teaching of His Word. These sacred ordinances have been brought to them, in the house of God, in such forms as seem well adapted to their present state of knowledge and experience. If the pastor does not believe this to be true, it is for him to make it true. See that the young people in your Sunday-school have the Gospel opened to their understandings and pressed home upon their wills. Hold a teachers' meeting; and preach through that. If superintendent and teachers be still inefficient, do what lies in your power to supply their lack of service. If they be faithful, do your part as a fellow-worker with them. Take time from pulpit preparation, if need be; and if the children will not come to you in the audience-room, go to them in the lecture-room. Read such a book as Armstrong's "Five-minute Sermons to Children"—which might better be called three-minute sermons—and learn that it is practicable, if desirable, to have *preaching* in the Sunday-school. The pastor in whose church the children are gathered together every Sunday for worship and instruction condemns himself in the complaint that they do not hear the Word of God.

But in point of fact most preachers have children in their congregations; and some preachers have a great many. Do they pay them a due amount of attention? Do they think of them sympathetically in preparing and preaching the sermon, and in conducting the devotional exercises? Fifty years ago Dr. Archibald Alexander gave it as his opinion that the ordi-

nary preaching of that day did the children "no manner of good." Henry Ward Beecher said, "I do not remember that I understood a single thing my father preached about till I was ten years old; and my father certainly was a good preacher." Has there been a marked improvement in the quality of adaptedness to children in the preaching of the present generation? Probably so; but much that is entirely practicable remains to be done.

Shall we be content, then, in the case of such services as are commonly rendered in the congregation, to have the children attend the Sunday-school only? By no means. Shall we put it upon the consciences of parents to exert authority, if needful, to bring their children with them to hear the word of preaching? Yes; as well as to bring them *with them* to Sunday-school. If the authority be exercised with a good measure of common sense, considerateness, and sympathy, we need have no doubt that the benefits will more than counterpoise the dangers. Even under the most unfavorable circumstances the young and partly unwilling hearer will get some sense of sacred things from the congregational prayer and praise, some word of truth from the sermon; and, in the habit-forming period of life, he will form the inestimably valuable habit of church attendance.

One word more. I have said that the Sunday-school is the church discipling the children; but that is not its whole idea. At the beginning it was an institution for taking neglected poor children out of the street, and with paid teachers instructing them in reading and writing. Very soon the work developed into that of the voluntary instruction of the children in the Scriptures, and their conversion to Christ. But there have always been classes of adults in the school, often composed of the most intelligent persons in the congregation. And now we are coming to see that the Sunday-school, according to its true idea, is the church organized as a Bible school, all together studying the Scriptures. It is the Bible service. I have given you sufficient

proof of my approval of the modern sermon,—an elaborate and continuous discourse, with persuasion to Christian discipleship as its great characteristic. But instruction, which comes before persuasion, is best given in the form of question and answer; and this work of instruction in its most effective form is the characteristic feature of the Sunday-school. We all need both. Let us agitate the question of the absence of grown people from our service of Christian teaching. In the Sunday-school in which I have the honor to be a teacher more than half the membership are men and women,—some of its scholars over sixty years of age. In a few instances the entire membership of the church may be found engaged, either as teachers or scholars, in this service. And this is now our ideal: the whole Sunday-school in the congregation, and the whole congregation in the Sunday-school.

II. **The Conditions of Success in Preaching to Children.**

1. The first is the adoption of *good methods*. For though it is true that the best method is ineffective without the right man behind it, the same thing is certainly not less true of the haphazard attempt.

(1) I have known the plan tried of having a ten-minute sermon to the children, just before the sermon to the rest of the congregation. It seems to me unlikely to succeed. It makes the service as a whole too long. It splits up the preaching into two portions, separate and distinct and yet placed in juxtaposition to each other,—a sermonette and a sermon. It requires each class of hearers to listen to what was not intended for them. Or it sends the children home by themselves at the end of their part of the service. There must be some better way.

(2) Have some reference to the young people in your ordinary preaching. Call their attention to such thoughts as may seem to be of special interest to them. Not, indeed, I would venture to suggest, in the phraseology that is sometimes employed: "Now, children, this is for you"; "Here is some-

thing that you can understand," and so on. Expressions of this sort give the preacher the appearance of condescension—of stepping down at intervals to the child's level—and seem to imply that the larger part of the sermon is for the older people only. Why ask the child to sit still and listen, if that part also is not for him? Surely we might devise some more skilful prefatory word. We may find good examples in Charles Kingsley's "Village Sermons." Now and then he directly addresses the young, in the most simple and unaffected manner: "And you, young men and women, consider—if God has given you manly courage and high spirits and strength and beauty—think" —"Young people! God has given you much. As a young man I speak to you"—"Think now, my boys, when you are at your work, how all things may put you in mind of God, if you do but choose"—"Oh, young men and women, boys and girls, believe those words."

Do not forget to pray for the young people in the pulpit. Have some regard to them, also, in the selection of the hymns. Do not let it be said that seldom is a hymn announced which the young people know and can sing.

(3) Now and then—or, what is better, periodically—preach distinctively to the children. In some churches this is done every Sunday evening, the sermon being more or less catechetical, and there being no other evening service. This solves the question, which is attracting earnest consideration in some places, as to what the character of the second service on the Lord's day should be. Or it may be deemed advisable to have a monthly "children's church." And why should this not take the place of the regular Sunday morning service? Give it the most favorable hour. It is worthy; and you yourself need to be at your best. Besides, the sermon would probably be as serviceable and acceptable to the older people as your ordinary preaching; perhaps more so. A certain hearer of Dr. Richard Newton represents, I believe, a larger class of minds than would be generally supposed: he was seldom present

except to hear the monthly sermon to children, and when asked the reason replied, "I understand these sermons best."

Even those who "understand" all your preaching will feel the charm of simplified Christian doctrine. An old professor of natural science once told me that he read the Science Primers with pleasure. The truths they teach, though familiar truths to him, brought fresh enjoyment, appearing in their simplest forms of statement.

Ask yourself at the end of any half-year, "What attention have I given in the last six months to the children? How many sermons have I preached to them?"

(4) Have questions and answers. This, as we have seen, is the didactic as contradistinguished from the oratorical method. The perfect example of it is in the discourses of our Lord. Would it be well to employ this method in our modern and Western congregations? At least it may be done in the congregation of children. Was there ever a more eloquent preacher in our country than John Summerfield? And we are told that he not only delighted in preaching to children, —giving them a monthly sermon during his pastorate in New York,—but introduced "almost an entirely new style of preaching to them, that of question and answer, giving him scope, and keeping up the attention of his little auditors." But tact will be required, and moderation must be observed. Do not abuse this privilege of interlocution by over-use.

2. *Careful specific preparation.* It is harder to interest children than grown-up hearers. Evidently so; because our customary forms of thought and expression are those of the maturer mind. Here, doubtless, is one chief reason—whatever others, real or fancied, may appear—why so little of it comparatively is done. We shrink from it as a difficult undertaking; and begin to excuse ourselves on the plea of a lack of gifts and adaptation.

The true course is to give this difficult duty all the more earnest attention. Trumbull, in his "Yale Lectures on the

Sunday-school," has collected the testimony of a number of prominent preachers to children—such as Drs. Todd, Newton, J. L. McKee, and Samuel Cox—to the effect that their sermons to children required more careful preparation than any of their other discourses. Dr. Richard Newton, who has preached and published so many sermons of this kind, says that none of them has cost him less than "four or five mornings of hard work from breakfast to dinner." And Dr. McKee has said, "If I were going to preach a sermon to the Congress of the United States I should not have anything like the apprehension that I should have were I going to preach to the children here in this city." These men depended on no happy knack, no impromptu power; but were willing to labor for the acquisition of easy, telling, childlike speech. Expect success in this as in every undertaking of your ministry to cost you patient, persistent effort; but doubt not it will be worth many times its cost.

Give more than ordinary attention to the selection of the text. Try to have it apt, short, rememberable. Then, just as in the sermon to adults, there should be a clearly defined outline, a solid basis of instruction, and a plain, pointed application. Do not imagine that doctrinal teaching must needs be uninteresting. On the contrary, the child-mind is eager for knowledge; it will find pleasure in great facts, and even in great truths, when not expressed in an "unknown tongue." Excessive attempts to amuse, or a mere wish-wash of feeble story-telling, will prove not only profitless, but unacceptable.

So, likewise, will a mock simplicity of style, an insipid, palavering mode of expression. Do not be childish. Your youthful hearer must feel that you are neither using strange, big words, on the one hand, nor "talking down" to him, on the other. A wise parent will show his child the greatest possible respect in the home. At the table, for example, he will not say to a visitor, "Will you have some fruit?" and then to his

bright-eyed and keen-eared boy of ten or twelve, "Do *you* want some?" So with the tactful speaker. He will show genuine respect for the youngest human soul before him.

3. *Sympathy.* Without this it is impossible to put yourself in touch with the natures you are dealing with. Indeed, you cannot so much as understand them. Love only can draw near enough to know. Now you may feebly affect the tone and manner of sympathy; or you may have the reality without sufficiently allowing it to come out in your speech. Have it, and let it fully appear. Be genuinely interested in young people. Never forget that you were once a boy. Enter into their joys, their plans, their difficulties and sorrows. Says one of the best of preachers to children, the Rev. J. Reid Howatt, "Once we lose the child within us, we grope in vain to reach the children around us."

But there will also be a deeper and more chastened tone in this fellow-feeling with the young. Think of what lies before them. They go out not knowing whither they go.

> "O little feet that such long years
> Must journey on through hopes and fears,
> Must ache and bleed beneath your load!"

Think of their capacities, just beginning to be strangly revealed to them. Every child-face is prophetic. In the young souls of to-day lies germinant the whole world's future. And then out of the vicissitudes of this life each of them must depart into eternity. Shall they be prepared? Let us draw near to them, in all our teaching and preaching, in tender, human, Christ-like sympathy. And by the way of the heart we may reach both the reason and the will. Gain their confidence, both in and out of the pulpit, and you may hope to win them to the divine Friend and Saviour.

4. *Vivacity.* Childhood is all astir with life. The cup is overflowing. To a person who would undertake to follow the movements, physical and mental, of an average child through

the course of a day, its activity and endurance would be surprising. The world is new, existence is sweet, and the young explorers are ever on the alert. Accordingly, the speaker who would quiet their restless bodies and capture their light-footed fancies must needs be childlike in the expression of his own more powerful life. Nothing less will prove attractive and masterful with them. Not that a noisy or a precipitate utterance is demanded. The manner of speech may be deliberate. But deliberation is not dullness; and from first to last there must be spirit, promptness, movement.

5. *Imaginative power.* I hardly know how to emphasize this more than I have already done in other connections. But, for an evident reason, it is here of preëminent importance. The imagination is one of the earliest and most rapid in development of all the powers of the mind. The faculties of abstract thinking and close reasoning lag far behind, and even to the end of life rarely overtake the imagination. Accordingly, it makes up a large part of the child's mental power and activity. Take advantage of it to convey the truth, by means of description and illustration, to his mind and heart.

Your texts and subjects themselves will often be illustrative; such as Bible metaphors, parables, incidents, characters. But, whatever the text, the sermon must set forth the truth largely in imaginative forms of speech.

And none will come closer home to the youthful mind, or exert a more salutary influence, than personal examples. Everybody feels the force of them. People are interested in and affected by one another. It is said to be a rule of newspaper reporters to introduce into their correspondence as many names of persons as possible. Indeed, what would the news, which young and old alike delight in,—what would it be with the personal element left out? Emphatically is it true of children that in no other way, apart from their own experience, can moral truth be made real to them so effectually as by its appearance in human lives. "What is holiness?" was asked

of a little girl in a mission church. "Why, holiness is the way Mr. —— lives," was the quick reply.

Get examples from the Bible and from your own observation. Get them also from histories, biographies, and children's books; but not from mere "goody" books. Let the men and women and especially the children whom you hold up as examples of good and evil be natural and representative characters,—not self-conscious, morbid, or impossible.

It is also to be borne in mind that in preaching to children the not uncommon tendency to overdo illustrations is very strong. Object-lessons are interesting and easily remembered; but certainly the rule for their employment is not, the more the better. Here is a fair example of the recommendations I have seen as to the use of this class of illustrative material, in some excellent manuals: "Another lecture on 'Ye are the light of the world' might be illustrated with different varieties of lights. One alone, and one with a *reflector* (a consistent life) behind it. A dark lantern, having light within, but showing little without. A beautiful but dim candle. A homely but powerful one. Danger-signals. Lights for protection of a house, others for illumination. So with *shades*, transparent, others translucent." I should think that fewer illustrative objects would make a better moral impression than so large and (perhaps) entertaining a display. Note the character of our Lord's object-lessons: "Show Me a penny. Whose image and superscription hath it?" (Luke xx. 24); "Ye would say unto this sycamine-tree, Be thou rooted up, and be thou planted in the sea; and it would have obeyed you" (Luke xvii. 6). Violate the law of simplicity anywhere, and the loss will be greater than the gain.

It is unquestionably so with verbal illustrations. You will be strongly tempted to employ them for their own sake. But if the illustration you have at command is not applicable, show that you have it *at command* by leaving it out. Or if it is not needed, leave it out. Above all, do not allow the illustration

to defeat its own object by so occupying attention with itself as to cast the truth to be illustrated into the background. "This fault," as Dr. Broadus has reminded us, "occurs very frequently in speaking to children. There is a mere succession of stories or pictures, which teach nothing, impress nothing, and, save as idle entertainment, are nothing." My little girl came home from a meeting some weeks ago, and told me, "Mr. Jones made a speech." "And what did he say?" "He said that when he was a little boy he and his sister were going out to cut pine-knots, and in getting over the fence his sister cut his hand with the hatchet, and he has the mark there still." "And what did he tell you that for? what did he mean by it?" She had no idea that the story was intended to *teach* anything. Her own fault, perhaps; certainly the speaker ought to have been careful that it should not be his. It will do the student no good to keep looking at his lamp; he even prefers that it should be set behind him: what he wishes is, by the aid of the lamplight, to see the printed page.

6. *Moral earnestness.* Not sternness or gloominess. Such a misrepresentation of religion is peculiarly out of place before an audience of children. Be cheerful; kindle a smile upon their faces. But, on the other hand, do not forget that to please is for the sake of edification, not for its own sake. The fact that it is often difficult to hold the child's attention and induce him to hear us gladly may incline us to feel satisfied when this object is accomplished, and thus to quit before we are done.

With the dawn of intelligence and affection there is likewise moral feeling. Hence you may appeal with confidence to the conscience and religious nature of even your youngest hearers. Put them to the test; ask whether it is right to speak the truth or to tell falsehoods, to be kind or to be cruel, to obey God or to disobey, to love the Saviour or to forget Him. No uncertain answers will be given. Rest assured the Spirit of God is beforehand with you in the child's heart. Recall

your own earliest experiences. Were they all unmoral and unspiritual? Can you remember a time when the thought of God did not inspire you with solemn awe, and the knowledge of right and wrong awaken some sense of personal accountability?

If whosoever receives the kingdom of God must receive it as a little child, surely the child himself may receive it. You will make it your aim, if truly in earnest, in every sermon to teach some truth of the kingdom of God. You will be satisfied only with seeing evidences that the young people of your charge are in the way of Christian experience and life.

7. There is great need of *knowledge and discrimination*— of true spiritual wisdom—in this ministry to young souls.

Do not assume that all who are not yet full members of the church are unregenerate. Many Christians cannot recall the time when they did not try to obey the Saviour. What manner of Christians are they? Superficial in experience, unsteady in character, unfruitful in life? Usually you will find none better in the church. The founder of the school of the prophets is their representative in the Old Testament, and the forerunner of Christ in the New Testament. Of such as the little child, notwithstanding its depravity, is the kingdom of heaven. Only by wilful sinning can the child come into condemnation. To bring it up "in the nurture and admonition of the Lord" is to teach and persuade it to pray and trust and obey, to turn to God penitently for the guidance and cleansing it may need every day (just as the mature Christian does). O that such training were the rule and not the exception in our homes! When may the regenerating grace of God be received by the child? As soon as the child can think, feel, act, morally. Is this grace withheld? If John the Baptist was filled with the Holy Spirit from his birth, may we not believe a measure of that same Spirit to be given to all our children? Indeed, is there not indubitable proof of it? Surely if the parent and Christian teacher, either directly or indirectly, in-

struct the children to look forward to a crisis of conversion at some suitable time in the future, it is inconsistent to teach them to pray *now*. For prayer is not the language of deliberate sin, of impenitence, of the unregenerate nature; it is the language of penitence, of faith, of nearness to God. From earliest childhood we may hear and heed the voice from heaven. If all the children of Christian parents were brought up faithfully and practically in this belief, very many would never know the habit of ungodliness.

You may suppose some such child-Christians to be in your congregation. Preach appropriately to them. But you may also safely assume that some of your youthful hearers are not of this class. They have not been willingly guided from infancy by the Spirit of God. They may be forming habits of sin. They are on their way from the Father's house to the "far country." Warn them, and win them. Try hopefully and confidently to bring them to the great Christian decision, the whole-hearted choice of Christ as their Saviour and Lord.

Nor should the preaching be confined to distinctively evangelical themes. Preach on various doctrines and duties, very much as in your sermons to the general congregation: e.g., on faith, the fatherhood of God, the facts of the life of Jesus, prayer, thankfulness, the evil consequences of sin, doing good, courage, temperance. You may expect all such themes to be useful both for conversion and upbuilding.

Do not abuse the child's emotive and volitional nature. This is often done by those whose zeal is tainted by insincerity or unregulated by knowledge. During a revival or in a Sunday-school prayer-meeting, for example, it is sometimes easy, through excessive demonstrations of sympathy and emotion, combined with a half-conscious exercise of authority, to overbear the will of almost any child. Then, of course, he will kneel for prayers or declare himself a penitent in any way you may wish. It is sad work. Spiritual darkness, dullness of heart, unbelief, are its appropriate fruits. The true Christian

treatment of souls is different. Instruct, convince, persuade with earnest and sympathetic words; but, in child and man, respect the sacredness of the will. Leave him free. Let him act for himself. To go just far enough in our pressure upon a young and flexible will is indeed a delicate and difficult art; but it must be learned.

Do not construct a false ideal of the religious experiences of a child. Above all, do not impose such an ideal upon him. To lead him at any time to believe he must feel as he need not will confuse his conscience and probably make him a hypocrite; it will not help him to become a Christian. A child's piety may be as real as that of a saint of half a century; but it will be—the piety of a *child*. The light of dawn, though as genuine as that of noonday, is happily not poured forth with the same volume and intensity. "When I was a child, I spake as a child, I felt as a child, I thought as a child." The kingdom of heaven in the heart of any human being is measured by his capacity; takes such forms of expression as are suited to his condition; and even in the case of the most saintly and the most gifted minds is never more than very inadequately expressed in *words*.

Read Bushnell's "Christian Nurture," Trumbull's "Yale Lectures on the Sunday-school," any volume of Dr. Richard Newton's "Sermons to Children."

LECTURE XXVI

THE PREACHER AS AN EVANGELIST

IT is too late in the history of Christianity to question the utility of religious revivals. Let their works praise them, —the churches and institutions of learning that have been founded, the neglected truths that have been set forth in new light, the millions of souls that have been converted, through their influence. The largest and probably the most aggressive religious denomination of our land is the great evangelical revival of the eighteenth century organized into permanent ecclesiastical forms. It was established and hitherto has been conducted preëminently as an evangelistic agency.

Still, is there not some half-defined objection in many devout minds to revivals of religion, as if they were not an element of the truest Christian life and work? Why should not the church live in the fullness of spiritual power, we may be ready to ask, all the year round and all the time? Even so; and yet we will look a little further into the subject. There must be a philosophy of revivals, as of everything else in the Christian life; and if we can make it out, this will help us to see them in their true light, whether they be a genuine experience in religion, or an ebullition of morbid and untrained emotion.

I. What, then, are the **Principles of Revivals?**

It will not do to say that these excitements, often so great and remarkable, are of God—divine manifestations—and that

this is all we need to know or can know about them. Agriculture is of God. All the farmer can do is to put separated portions of matter together: "nature [God] working within does the rest." Only He who made the grain of wheat can make it grow: it is a manifestation of infinite beneficent power. Nevertheless we talk about the principles of agriculture; for by this we mean those laws written by the finger of God on material things, in accordance with which man must work in order to get a harvest. In like manner, the laws written on human souls, with which we must coöperate in order to have a revival of religion, are what we wish to know in seeking the principles of revivals. "So is the kingdom of God, as if a man should cast seed upon the earth; . . . and the seed should spring up and grow, he knoweth not how."

1. *It is in the nature of the soul that it should experience at times a greater fullness of life and joy.* Nor is this due to human imperfections: we cannot conceive it otherwise even in the most perfect character.

Indeed, have we not here one high expression of a larger law? All life ebbs and flows: though always persisting, its energies have their points of culmination and dispersion. There is seed-time and harvest. What an evangelist is the rising sun,—with his quickening light and heat, and his "words" declaring the glory of God "to the end of the world"!

The same thing is true of the intellect and the heart. There are times when all the mind can do is to follow some other man's thought or plod in some familiar path; and again there are supreme moments of inspiration and creative power. Do we not say even of the greatest genius that he sometimes falls below and sometimes surpasses himself? So there are times when the love of kindred and friends consciously possesses and constrains the soul as it does not ordinarily. So with grief: it spends its force, but at some other time will gather it up again. Who could pass his days in continuous tears—or laughter?

We need not be surprised, then, to find that the spiritual movement of the soul is not upon one dead level of consciousness. There are occasions of deeper insight, of larger outlook, of more abundant joy—the House Beautiful and the Delectable Mountains—in the life of the most faithful and the most saintly (Acts iv. 31–33; 2 Cor. xii. 2–4). The daily walk of God's obedient children is close with Him; nevertheless they have seasons of unusual refreshing from His presence. Was it because he was not always equally earnest and devout that Ray Palmer could not have composed such a hymn as "My faith looks up to Thee," every week of the year? If there ever lived a man who could write a hymn at any time, and in point of fact was writing them continually, such a man was Charles Wesley. Yet how many has he given us like "Jesus, Lover of my soul," and "Come, O Thou Traveler unknown"? Bishop Marvin tells this experience: "Soon after I united with the church I had an experience I am sure I can never forget. I was in the saddle, on the Lord's day, on my way to a social meeting in the country. The aspects of the autumnal scenery are as distinct in my memory as if it had been yesterday: the warm sun lay upon the mottled foliage, and there seemed the hush of a hallowed peace upon the face of nature. All at once the thought came to me, 'I am in the church and it is in my power now, by my unholy living, to bring a blot on the church, and to dishonor the Saviour.' For a time the reflection seemed insupportable; it was more than I could bear." Would this sense of responsibility have come upon him every day with the same awful tremblings of joy and pain, if only he had been a better man? John Flavel had one day in which "still, still the joy of the Lord overflowed him, and he seemed to be an inhabitant of the other world." He called it one of the days of heaven; and said it had taught him more of what the heavenly life must be than all he had ever heard or read. Could he have lived his whole life and done his whole work in that third heaven of religious ecstacy?

Now let such feelings spread from soul to soul, and the church is in a state of revival.

2. But is there any reason why they should thus spread and multiply? Yes; the *power of personal presence, the contagion of sympathy, the contact of mind with mind.*

The Christian graces are increased in us not only through prayer, but also through brotherhood. Faith, hope, and love are thus developed. "Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the custom of some is." Why? Because we thus provoke one another to love and good works; because every such meeting, through what each both receives and gives, is in each a renewal of the spiritual mind. "Comfort yourselves together, and edify one another, even as also ye do."

Now hold a series of meetings. Meet on successive days. Let impressions be repeated. Devote much time to Christian fellowship. Let the preaching be frequent, fervent, insistent. The natural result is a general quickening of the religious life.

Nor is it any disparagement of revivals to say that the divine influence is communicated and diffused largely along social lines. Why should it not be? Especially why should not backsliding Christians and the unconverted be thus brought into contact with the power of the Gospel? The redeeming love of God becomes real to men, thrilling through the looks and lives of their fellows. They are interested, rebuked, attracted, stirred out of their torpor, by the spiritually alive souls about them. Yes; by the Gospel and the Spirit of God in those souls.

Moreover, we may assume that at almost any time there are persons in the congregation who are interested concerning their own salvation, and yet are hesitating and putting off the full committal of themselves to Christ. What do they need? It may be, the excitation that will come from a revived and rejoicing church. The rising tide of religious feeling and moral

earnestness in the church will uplift the timid, procrastinating soul, and start it forth in the Christian life.

3. But we shall also do well to remember that *it is not for us to know the times and seasons which the Father has put in His own power.* Could the baptism of fire at Pentecost have been given, even to a church praying and trusting "with one accord in one place," before Jesus was glorified? Could Luther have been the leader in such a revival as the Reformation had he been born five hundred years earlier? Is the fact that the Chinese Empire is not now ablaze with Pentecostal power due to a lack of faith and labor on the part of the Christian missionaries in that land? The same principle may apply to the particular congregation or pastoral charge.

There are circumstances, epochs, conditions, which, for reasons partly or wholly beyond our control, are specially propitious for the revelation of the truth and power of God. With Him, indeed, the Father of lights, there is no variableness. His word is always equally true,—"Ask, and ye shall receive." But men are not always the same. Their theories and pursuits, their beliefs and unbeliefs, the spirit and temper of a community or of a whole nation,—these conditions may vary significantly from time to time. Who can see just what is taking place, at any time, in the hundreds or thousands of souls around him? There may be great and numerous obstacles to the shining forth of God's glory in the moral world that we do not know and cannot remove. Or it may be that here and now in our neighborhood "the kingdom of heaven is at hand." Are we in the divine order, working together with God, diligent in season and out of season, expectant, believing? We need have no other concern.

Does it follow from these facts and principles that in the interim of revivals there must be a decline of personal religion? On the contrary, the higher the spiritual tone of the church and the more abundant its habitual activity, the more genuine, salutary, and permanent in its effects will be the re-

vival when it comes. In fact, is not a true revival like the springtime to a tree,—opening out the soul into a new spiritual year, making a permanent addition to its vitality, strength, and fruitfulness? In other words, is it not a process of *growth?*

II. But we must also look at the practical side of our subject,—**the Promotion and Conduct of Revivals.**

1. Make careful plans and preparation. Choose a time for the meeting when the people's minds are least likely to be diverted or prepossessed by secular interests,—by politics, business, social life.

Talk to your church-members about the proposed undertaking. Commend it to their prayers. Ask their opinions; ask what each is willing to do; get promises of coöperation. Make it a personal matter. Are there not some who have never led a soul to Christ? Show them that now is a favorable opportunity. Interest parents for their children, Sunday-school teachers for their scholars, friends for their friends. All the while be sure that you yourself are in constant communion with the God of grace and almighty power. Thus the sacred fire already burning in your soul will enkindle others.

2. Purify your own heart from double-mindedness. What are your motives? Reputation, financial improvement, ecclesiastical promotion, *and* the love of Christ? Let this last motive become so powerful and dominant that the others will be as nothing. Otherwise there is danger of much spurious work (1 Cor. iii. 11–15), and personally you may come out of the meeting with spiritual loss and damage. You will be greatly disposed to "count," and to publish, and to put numbers above quality.

Deal as faithfully with your helpers as with yourself. Let there be deep searchings of heart. Gather all willing souls about you, and let minister and people reconsecrate themselves to God and His service. Not simply for the work before you.

Not as a mere expedient for the success of the meeting. Self-consecration, remember, is itself the highest success and the truest revival.

3. The winning of souls is not limited to the public occasion. It is also personal and private. Take advantage of casual meetings with the unconverted to speak a word in season. But not this alone: seek them out and consider how they may best be approached. Use all possible tact and common sense, and always in a kindly spirit,—a spirit "of love and of a sound mind." This will be less exciting work and more difficult, perhaps, than the conduct of the meetings. Hence the temptation to a sort of officialism which prompts the plea, It is my business to take charge, to be the public leader. But men may often be won singly, face to face, by loving and earnest personal work, when all other methods have proved insufficient (John ix. 35–38).

4. There will be much singing. While sympathizing with it heartily, guide it wisely. Do not assume that sincere and rejoicing worshipers will necessarily find their own best mode of utterance in song. They may often be greatly helped, and sometimes against their own will. Many Sunday-school and revival songs have won their way into use by the spirit and beauty of their tunes rather than by the appropriateness of their words. Choose the best. Let mere feeble and tasteless ditties fall out of use. Let the service of song sustain, not enfeeble and burlesque, the Christian sentiment which it seeks to express and communicate. This is a matter of truth and simplicity, not merely of taste.

5. Revival preaching offers the type to which all preaching ought more or less completely to conform. Hence it is no new thing to us at this stage of our studies.

It must aim at definite and immediate results.

It must be evangelical. Search for the strongest possible motives to repentance. They are found in the Law and the Gospel of Christ. Preach these in all their simplicity, plainly

and tenderly, without verbiage, without speculation, without irrelevant exposition or discussion.

Often it is a nice point to decide how much preaching, in the stricter sense, to have. Too little may encourage superficiality; too much may hold attention to the contemplation of truth, after the time has come for action. Besides, we shall find it expedient often to make Christian testimony prominent in the meetings. But let there be preaching,—texts taken and sermons delivered, short, clear, sympathetic, and strong. Do not be content with mere talks.

Usually one preacher is better than two or more. A new voice and style of utterance, though they should be good in themselves, will awaken and gratify curiosity rather than spiritual desire. Besides, a stranger is not likely to be in sympathy with the state of feeling in the congregation. Dr. Finney would not allow a strange preacher to occupy the pulpit in a meeting of which he had charge. "I supposed," he says, "that Christ had put the work into my hands in such a sense that I was under obligation to adapt means to ends, and not to call upon others who knew little of the state of things to attempt to instruct the people. I did in these cases just as I would be done by. I would not allow myself to go in where another man was laboring to promote a revival, and suffer myself to be put in his place, when I knew little or nothing about the state of the people." At least let the pastor still be the leader, and by exhortation and otherwise adapt the preaching of any helper he may have to the mind and feeling of the people.

Professional evangelists, when sincere and devout,—not lovers of money or notoriety,—have their place. But it is better that you should not need to call for them. Are you not also an evangelist? Be true to your commission. The experience of the great revival pastor of the Methodist Episcopal Church, Dr. J. O. Peck, is very instructive: "No one ever began the ministry more diffident, more easily embarrassed,

more afraid to speak to persons, or more ignorant of the way to do it, than the writer. He often became so confused that neither the people nor he himself could make any sense out of what he was saying. Frequently he was tempted of Satan to feel that he had no call nor adaptation to the work. At last he determined by the help of God to be a *soul-saving* pastor. It cost him ten years of hard work before he began to understand some of the methods of success, and for the whole thirty years he has been learning diligently in this school. But in his poor blundering work this conviction has been solidified into purpose and faith,—that the pastor and local church are sufficient for producing a revival under the assured power of the Holy Ghost. We *dare not* believe less."

6. *Insist* with all possible urgency upon the prompt and entire surrender of the soul to Christ; and earnestly *advise* that the wish or determination to make this surrender be shown at once in some suitable act. I know of none so suitable as to kneel in prayer among the people of God. This is not simply an act of public committal to the Christian life: it is an actual and direct seeking of God and calling upon Him. But other opportunities may be given,—to ask for prayers, to remain after dismission, to attend an inquiry-meeting. Anything to tone up the will and bring the wavering soul to the point of decision.

Such acts of committal are not peculiar to modern revivals. They are evidently in the spirit of Scripture precedents. The multitude on the day of Pentecost cried out *at once*, "What shall we do?"—and the preacher's reply was, "Repent ye, and *be baptized*, every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ unto the remission of your sins." Likewise did John, in his vast congregation by the river Jordan, urge his hearers not only to repent, but to be baptized *then and there*, as a sign of their repentance and readiness for the coming kingdom of God. John, also, had his "inquiry-meeting." The people asked him, "What shall we do?" The publicans came, and

the soldiers, with the same question. And in each case he had the appropriate answer ready (Luke iii. 10–13).

But there is liability to over-emphasis. The impression may easily be made indirectly—it is not likely to be made otherwise—that such an act of committal is *the* thing to be done. Rather let the preacher direct his energies toward producing strong convictions of sin and heartfelt repentance. If, by the grace of God, this point be gained, there will be little difficulty about the rest. The truly convicted and repentant sinner will not need to be continually urged to do this and that. He will be ready to go anywhere, to do anything, to lay hold of any help that may offer.

7. There will sometimes be irregularities to control. Loudness is a wretched substitute for earnestness. Noisy demonstrations in the ears of inquirers and penitents are not only unseemly, but confusing and stupefying. Have silent prayers, and hymns in a low tone of voice, now and then. Do not give such instructions as shall make people feel it to be either a means or a sign of spiritual life, in singing and prayer, to scream. If your scriptural conduct of the meeting should be adversely criticised, you can well afford to take it kindly, being in the right. Wesley's experience, given in a letter to Adam Clarke, is suggestive: "In the great revival in London my first difficulty was to bring in temper those who opposed the work, and my next to check and regulate the extravagancies of those that promoted it; and this was far the greater part of the work, for many of them would bear no check at all. . . . Meantime, while you act exactly right, expect to be blamed on both sides. . . . Never think a man is an enemy to the work because he reproves irregularity."

8. The sinful soul has been convinced of its sin, and is now an inquirer for the way of salvation, or a penitent, contrite and prayerful. What can we do for such a soul? We can encompass it with our prayers, and commend it to that Holy Spirit who alone is able to guide the seeker of God aright. But the word of counsel must also be given.

In your anxiety to have the penitent make confession of Christ, do not be so unwise and cruel as to comfort him with false teaching. Do not assure him that he has found a blessing which not only is he unconscious of, but which you have no valid reason to believe he possesses. It may be done, among other ways, by some such fallacious argument as this: "Do you love the Saviour?" "Yes." "Do you not believe He loves you?" "Yes." "Well, religion is love; that's religion, that's conversion." As if nine tenths of those who come to find instruction in our meetings would not feel it a duty to answer such questions in the affirmative. What sort of dealing with a penitent soul is it to put him in a position where he feels constrained to make a confession for which he is unprepared? Help him to find the peace of conscious acceptance with God, always and by all means; but do not tell him he has it, nor put your own words in his mouth.

We are to be ministers of the new covenant, not of the letter, but of the spirit. An evangelist says: "Accept the Lord Jesus Christ, and you shall be saved. He has done the work of redemption. Will you accept Him as your Saviour?" "I will," is the answer from this or that hearer. "Then, His word for it, you are saved." But what deeply experienced Christian teacher does not know the danger of substituting words for realities, the danger of *salvation by the letter?* A man must have a sense of his sin and need, and a turning of the heart from sin to Christ, before ever he can know what it means to say, "I accept the Saviour." The word of salvation is not "He who says, 'I believe,'" but "He who *believes*"— with personal surrender and self-crucifixion—"shall be saved."

In the Roman Catholic Church the penitent in the confessional believes that he is forgiven, because the priest has told him so. In all our congregations are those who want the minister to tell them that they are saved. Do not act the priest toward this infirmity of human nature. Instruct, pray, encourage with the precious evangel of Christ; be a teacher

and a helper; but pronounce no word of absolution. Lead the penitent to God, that he may not only be forgiven, but may have the assurance of forgiveness imparted by the still, small voice of God's Spirit in the heart.

On the other hand, you may have to correct an exaggerated idea in the inquirer's mind of the evidences of conversion. If he be unwilling to believe himself an accepted child of God without some such ecstatic joy as certain other persons have seemed to experience, he needs to be taught what is the true witness of the Spirit in the believing heart. Has he been enabled to trust? is the sense of condemnation gone? has he the filial feeling toward God? has he some sense of nearness to God through Jesus Christ? is the word that seems to befit his lips in prayer, all unworthy as he is, "Our Father who art in heaven"? Then has God sent forth the Spirit of His Son into that penitent heart, crying, "Father." Let him make confession of Christ, and go forth to do the will of his heavenly Father.

The main difficulty with most inquirers is *an unwillingness to give up all sin.* They would retain something,—some spirit of unforgivingness, of vanity, of covetousness. But all must go. There can be no compromise. The very right eye, if it offend, must be plucked out. Do not speak of entire consecration as peculiar to some advanced stage of Christian life: it is also at the beginning thereof. Persuade the inquirer, by the grace of God, to make this consecration of himself at the Cross of Jesus—he is then and there accepted. It must be so; and he may expect the answering voice of the Divine Spirit within assuring him of sonship to God.

But suppose the answer of peace should not come to the soul even after this entire self-surrender seems to have been made. It will often be the case. And the word of wisdom to such a soul is: Quit seeking assurance, and seek to do the will of God; obey; be self-forgetful; go right on in the path of love and duty; be wholly given up to the work of the Lord,

say to yourself, "Whether I be a Christian or not, I am going to live in Jesus's name, to make other people better and happier." Ere long this way of obedience will prove to be the way of peace.

9. Let nothing discourage you. Be cheerful, hopeful, sweet-spirited throughout. Show no irritation of feeling when disappointed in the result of your efforts. Be all the more earnest and indomitable. A brave, confident leader,—what fullness of life is in him for all his followers! Dr. R. W. Dale, of Birmingham, in his account of the effect of Moody and Sankey's work in that city upon certain persons who had long been members of Christian churches, says: "I hardly know how to describe the change that has come upon them. It is like the change which comes upon a landscape when clouds which have been hanging over it for hours vanish, and the sunlight seems to fill both heaven and earth. There is a joyousness and an elasticity of spirit, and a hopefulness, which have completely transformed them; and the transformation shows itself in the unostentatious eagerness with which they are taking up Christian work." It was not an inexplicable state of mind. The "sunlight" of a strong and joyous presence had fallen upon them,—a contagion from the looks, words, acts, of those strong-hearted servants of the Lord Jesus Christ.

And the secret of it all—the deepest and most significant condition of success in this great work of the Lord—is *faith*. Believe in men. Notwithstanding their flippancy, their littleness, their animalism, their vices, sins, and crimes, believe in the possibilities of their nature. See the germs of good as well as of evil in them,—as a parent does in his children, as a righteous and loving friend does in his friend. Believe that God has made them for an immortal destiny; that He can love them and call them His children; that He has redeemed them by the Cross; that He has shown them in His Son Jesus Christ what glory of character and of life it is possible for them to reach

What, then, are the various methods of preparation with reference to delivery?

1. *General or habitual preparation only.* The preacher does not even select his theme, it may be, before meeting the congregation. The whole sermon — materials, plan, language — is given impromptu; invention and delivery are practically simultaneous.

Now this would seem to be the ideal mode. It may certainly be said that the better furnished the preacher has become, intellectually and morally, the less need there will be for specific preparation. In an ever-enlarging sense of the word, he will be always ready. Dr. Archibald Alexander showed his faith in the possibilities of impromptu speech, in his own case, by declaring more than once that "if he were to stake his life on a single effort, he would, if familiar with the general subject, abandon himself entirely to the impulse of the moment." Another significant example may be found in the autobiography of President Finney, who believed his unpremeditated sermons to be given him by direct inspiration of the Holy Spirit: "When I first began to preach, and for some twelve years of my earliest ministry, I wrote not a word; and was most commonly obliged to preach without any preparation whatever, except what I got in prayer. Oftentimes I went into the pulpit without knowing upon what text I should speak, or a word I should say. I depended on the occasion and the Holy Spirit to suggest the text, and to open up the whole subject to my mind; and certainly in no part of my ministry have I preached with greater success and power. If I did not preach from inspiration, I don't know how I did preach. It was a common experience with me, and has been during all my ministerial life, that the subject would open up to my mind in a manner that was surprising to myself."

It must have been a similar experience that such a man as Chrysostom enjoyed in his ministry. For how otherwise could he have preached, as he did, day after day, with such direct-

LECTURE XXVII

PREPARATION OF THE SERMON WITH REFERENCE TO ITS DELIVERY

IN preparing an article for publication, when the writer lays aside the pen his work is done: the types will do the rest. But preparing a sermon is preparing to preach: author and publisher are one. And this fact must have large significance with respect to the kind and the amount of preparation required. The writer has simply to consider, "What effect will this piece have upon people as they read it?" The preacher asks, "How may I get ready to stand before the people and speak to them effectively?"

Let me assume two things: first, that you are unprejudiced as to which method is best; secondly, that you are willing to adopt the best method, no matter how much labor and self-mortification it may seem to involve. The assurance that these two assumptions are valid would greatly encourage me, at the start.

It is not true, though some believe it, that this is a matter whose importance in homiletics has been exaggerated,—that, inasmuch as an earnest man will make his preaching effective on any method, he need be little concerned as to the method he may choose or happen to follow. Let it be our endeavor to find, not *a* way, but *the* way, in all that relates to the incomparable work of ministering the truth of Christ.

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ness, affluence, and power, often apparently without any immediate preparation? It was "given him in that same hour" what he should say.

All this I can well believe; and I think none of us should be satisfied without the realization of some such power. I can accept Dr. Phelps's definition of a sermon—"an oral address to the popular mind, upon religious truth contained in the Scriptures, and elaborately treated with a view to persuasion" —and still believe in unpremeditated preaching, both as an occasional fact and a permanent ideal.

But let us remember that the Spirit of God gives no inspiration in disregard of mental conditions and laws, or as a substitute for human exertion. To be always ready to preach means to be single-minded,—"to be able to say, 'This one thing I do,' rather than, 'These forty things I dabble in.'" The preacher who is always gathering materials, consciously or unconsciously, who has acquired some facility in planning a discourse, and who is always in the spirit of preaching, need not be surprised to find the sermon, both plan and development, opening out before him in the pulpit without previous study.

As to that impromptu preaching which consists of a jumble of superficial expository remarks, with like exhortations appended, destitute of substance, sequence, and force; or a procession of words and phrases, with only now and then a corresponding idea; or divers parts of old sermons patched together and mechanically sewed to the text,—such extemporizing is so far from being impressive that it excites pity and often deserves indignation.

It is also to be borne in mind that, while the demand for habitual and the demand for specific preparation are indeed related under a law of inverse proportion, the latter demand will seldom fall away to nothing. The really new sermon will almost always have its proper and distinct origin in a course of premeditation.

2. *To preach from a general outline of the subject, preparea*

beforehand. A common defect under this method is that the sermon begins, continues, and ends a *skeleton*; or at best a starveling. As well equipped an extemporaneous preacher as Dr. James W. Alexander confesses that, in his attempts to preach from mere heads of discourse, he has always been disappointed by not having as much to say under each head as he had expected. Not infrequently the procedure is somewhat as follows: The preacher announces his first division, which he hoped would develop in the pulpit; but probably he is disappointed; the division does not develop. So he is constrained to repeat it in slightly varied phraseology; and after a few remarks which, he is vaguely aware, are neither pertinent nor forcible, he must pass on to the next prepared thought. When all is done, there has been a good deal of repetition, a good deal of irrelevant matter, a good deal of

> "commonplace
> And vacant chaff well meant for grain,"

but not a single well-elaborated point. Still, something has been accomplished; for in the pulpit the preacher did make an effort to develop his outline. And so will he do again, when opportunity occurs to repeat the sermon. More and more is thus gradually gained; till, after numerous repetition, this preacher may have nearly as good a sermon as he is capable of producing.

But observe, he is not now preaching from a mere general outline. He began with that, but has been filling it out from time to time *in the pulpit.* Not alone, not on his knees before God, not while going about the duties of the day; but with open mouth before his congregations. In the study he has done other things, or nothing. The pulpit is his study; and the people, young and old, sluggish and quick-witted, are expected to come together, not only to hear a discourse when there is one to hear, but also, when there is one in process of construction, to sit patiently and witness the making of it.

I have intimated that the sermon prepared on this method, though sadly meager at first, may finally become "good to the use of edifying." Let me now say, the probabilities are that it will not. Because the verbosities in which the preacher is almost sure to indulge, in his attempts to develop his plan in the act of delivery, will probably remain as part of the sermon, and be substantially repeated on every subsequent occasion.

May I illustrate this kind of sermon-making in the pulpit? The preacher, let us suppose, intends to say: "The Christian is a lover of man. Taught of Christ, he discerns something dear and sacred in humanity in whatever condition it appears." But being on the alert, as each word falls from his lips, for something further to say, he amplifies as follows: "The Christian, the man who has repented of his sins and believed on the Lord Jesus Christ, and who is striving to follow Him and to be like Him,—to follow Him through evil as well as good report,—is a lover of man, a lover of mankind, a friend to all. Taught of Christ, who spake as never man spake, he discerns something dear and sacred in humanity in whatever condition it appears, in all men, something good in all; or if not actually good, something at least that promises good, some germ of goodness; he has an eye to see it, if he be a Christian,—he is able to see something sacred in all men, the high and the low, the rich and the poor, the educated and the illiterate," etc. So this extemporaneous preacher plods along, in zigzag course, crossing and recrossing the straight path on to the end. What is fondly called the "development" of the thought is, in fact, its *en*velopment in useless wrappings of words.

Now if in any preacher's case nothing more than a proper arrangement of the chief points of discourse be necessary beforehand, for him the question is settled. Similarly if he should have no need to prepare even an outline, it would be a waste of time to do so. But let there be no taking counsel of the flesh; let him be sure that he is wise, observant, and honest in reaching his decision.

In the act of preaching the energies of the soul must be free to feel and to deliver the truth. The opportunity to go in search of it is over. Any division of mental energy between the effort to think up something to say, on the one hand, and the realization and delivery of it, on the other, detracts by so much from the power of one's utterance. There must be no labor of thought. *Habere, non haberi.* All except spontaneous or virtually spontaneous thinking is out of place before an audience.

Unquestionably very many sermons are preached every Sunday which, if stenographically reported, would astonish the preacher by their meagerness, their weak repetitions, and their similarity to sermons recently delivered to the same congregation. And these defects would have been avoided, in most cases, by a more thorough and conscientious preparation.

3. *To write and read.* This method seems to be entirely modern, and almost entirely confined to English-speaking preachers. Its general adoption in any church is hardly less than a calamity. A great deal, it is true, depends on how the discourse is read. Just as one man will render a hymn or a Scripture lesson in such a manner as to interpret and vivify every word; while another, or perhaps the same man at another time, will only confuse or tire his hearers; so, in the case of sermons, there is reading and reading. I can recall two preachers who read their sermons so as to make the impression, at least on my own mind, that it could only spoil their delivery to preach in any other way.

To deliver a sermon effectively on this method requires not only the power to throw one's whole thought and heart into one's manuscript, but also an overflowing mental vivacity. True, the extemporaneous speaker must also be vivacious; but the difference is that free speech is adapted to bring out and utilize all one's latent energy, while the manuscript is repressive. It has been said that you may "use the paper to kindle the fire"; but I, for one, have seldom been able to kindle such

fire with such fuel—and long ago abandoned the attempt. The orator must be all alive: consider whether, like that prince of sermon-readers, Thomas Chalmers, you have the enthusiasm, the resilience, the quick and energetic movement that are more than enough for extemporaneous speech.

You will also probably find, as a matter of fact, that those preachers who, speaking from a full manuscript, hold an audience in rapt attention are not so much readers as reciters of sermons. Like professional readers, they repeat memoriter,—with frequent glances, partly to assist the memory, and partly from habit, at the composition before them. "Who could find fault," asks Dr. Hoppin, "with the preaching of such a man as Horace Bushnell in his prime, when the manuscript before him seemed to vanish, and he soared above it, and above all art, by the force of his strong thinking and the inspiration of a divine and expanding theme?" Few indeed would find fault with such preaching from manuscript; but is it reading? Is not the sermon written on the memory as well as on the paper, and read off chiefly from that?

Concerning the late Canon Liddon's preaching we are told: "Liddon's method of delivery was the manuscript method, and was universally employed; but he had so mastered his subject and was so familiar with his manuscript that it was no more in his way than the banks of a stream hinder the liberty of the swiftly flowing current. It often seemed that he dispensed with his manuscript while it actually lay before him. The oratorical expression from manuscript was an admirable example of the vital difference between reading a paper and *delivery* from manuscript." But here again we have, in reality, grand and impressive recitation.

Nor can we by any means assume that if the sermon be written in full it will at least be a well-prepared address. It may be better than *some* extemporized addresses; but that proves nothing. Indifferent thinking expressed in feeble writing is extremely common.

To read religious discourses to the people was not the original custom; it is not the approved custom of the present day; we may safely predict that it will not be prevalent in the future. There is an artificiality about it that cannot be reasoned away. It repels the popular mind. It fails to give fair play to the powerful personal element in preaching. It marks the furthest possible remove from the natural and eloquent method of speech. "What do our clergy lose," asks Julius C. Hare, "by reading their sermons? They lose preaching, the preaching of the voice in many cases, the preaching of the eye almost always." The sermon should not be in front of the preacher, to be picked up by him and delivered over to the congregation: it should be both of him and in him.

4. *To write in full and preach memoriter.* This is not nearly so slavish a practice as many seem to suppose. To memorize a discourse of our own, which we have first thought out logically from beginning to end, and then have written with equal care, is much less difficult than to memorize the writings of another. Besides, the preacher who composes with the intention of recalling and delivering his words will endeavor to write in a clear, simple, straightforward style. To relieve the memory of unnecessary burdens, he will avoid long and involved sentences, and will choose the most natural and lucent forms of expression.

Let us, then, not waste sympathy on the minister who has adopted the memoriter method. Supposing him to have a faithful and well-trained verbal memory, he is under no compulsion to work too hard. Dr. Hoppin's opinion, that "few men can commit a sermon in less than two days so as to be perfectly free," must be the result of a very imperfect induction. Many men would have little use for more than two hours. "I never begin to commit," says Norman Macleod, in the journal of his early ministry, "till Saturday night—four readings do it." To some men, indeed, the memoriter mode of preparation would be not simply difficult, but impossible.

Of Adam Clarke it is stated that "after delivering five thousand sermons he could not recall an instance in which he knew beforehand a single sentence that he had to utter; for his memory could not retain words." Dr. R. S. Storrs can hardly trust himself to quote a sentence. Minds like those of Alexander, Clarke, and Storrs, of quick creative power in language, are not likely, for obvious reasons, to have a tenacious and ready memory for words. But, so far as public speaking is concerned, neither are they much in need of it.

It is certain that unless the sermon be perfectly memorized, so that in the act of preaching it can be recalled with the slightest consciousness of effort, its delivery will be feeble. Because the whole energy of the soul being required for the delivery of the sermon, there will never be any to spare for the process of recollection. Better read nimbly from a fair manuscript than heavily and painfully decipher for your congregation "a written trouble of the brain." Though, when well done, memoriter preaching is greatly preferable to reading.

But the instincts of both people and preacher are hostile to the recitation of sermons. "He is repeating, word for word, what he wrote last week or last year in his study": such a thought in the minds of the congregation tends to depreciation of the preaching. A similar thought in your own mind is at least lacking in inspiration. "Even where there is the most laborious preparation," says Professor R. C. Jebb, in his "Attic Orators," "even where the fact of such preparation is notorious, it is generally felt to be essential to impressiveness that the fact of *verbal* premeditation should be kept out of sight, and on the part of the hearers it is considered more courteous to ignore it." Such instincts are in the line of truth, intellectual and moral, and should not be despised.

A much stronger objection may be drawn from the ceaseless variations of our intellectual and emotional states. What you write, if genuine, is the expression of your present feeling. Have you any assurance that it will express the feeling of next

Sunday or even of the next hour? About as much as that the sky above your head will be the same. Commit yourself, then, to a fixed form of verbal expression, and the risk of finding it unsuitable at the time of speaking must be incurred.

Nor can either of the two ordinary ways of avoiding, or at least of minifying, this difficulty be approved.

If, on the one hand, the preacher should say, "I will cultivate the art of throwing myself into my piece and catching its tone, whatever that may be," it is the actor's art rather than the preacher's that he has chosen. The actor feels; but it is through identifying himself in imagination with the character he personates,—in the case of the preacher-actor the personation being that of some past self of his own. But the orator is supposed to express, not his conception of the subject with the feelings which it awakened at some past time,—whether a year or an hour ago,—but his present thought and feeling in their appropriate modes of communication. The finest possible acting would be a paltry substitute for genuine preaching. Moreover, the preacher's acting is likely to be poor. How often do we hear pathetic allusions or appeals, and bold figures of speech, in the pulpit, that waken no emotion but weariness or disgust! Are these, then, mock pathos and sublimity? Probably not—in the manuscript. They were written there because at that time they were felt. But now the preacher's mood is changed, while his language, having already crystallized, remains the same.

If, on the other hand, in order to avoid this painful dissonance between what he feels and what he says, the preacher should carefully abstain from the use of all highly imaginative and emotional language, he is deliberately surrendering important elements of power. How can he, with a good conscience, thus impoverish his pulpit?

5. *To think out the language of the sermon without writing, and preach memoriter.* We are told in the introduction of the "Sermons" of Bishop Pierce that he "could think a sermon

through, exegesis, argument, enlargement, illustrations, and the very words, and deliver it as accurately as if he had written it and memorized it. Knowing this peculiar gift of his tenacious memory for words as well as thoughts," continues the writer, "I once ventured to say to him that his condemnation of those who could not do like him, and must needs write on paper to memorize, was hardly fair." Robert Hall had this power in an eminent degree, and sometimes availed himself of it; so had the eloquent Bishop John Johns of Virginia, and others who might be mentioned. But the method is rarely practised. To most men it would be well-nigh unattainable; and even when employed, it would seem to possess but little advantage over the ordinary memoriter method.

6. *To prepare a full outline, with more or less development, and preach extempore.* Here we come to what may fairly be called the chosen method of them all. It makes provision for the various elements of powerful speech—substance, language, order, freedom—in such proportions as seem best adapted to the generality of preachers.

Now let us see. It is essential, first of all, that the plan be elaborated thoroughly, and according to some logical sequence of thought. This gives the extemporaneous sermon a decided advantage over the discourse that is written to be read. The latter is not usually so well connected in its various parts. It is apt to become excursive and essay-like. "I take my text," said the most brilliant sermon-reader I have ever known, "and go wherever my thoughts carry me." "How do you know when you are done?" asked a friend. "I lay out so much paper," was the answer, "and when that is used up, quit." The impromptu speaker commonly proceeds in a somewhat similar manner,—instead of "so much paper," laying out so much *time*. But the extemporizer observes order, unity, continuous progress toward a definite end.

Observe, it is a part of this method that there shall be some development of the plan beforehand. The preacher must

look at his ideas on all sides, turning them over and over in his mind,—working out his exegesis, finding his proofs, choosing his illustrations.

And this will require the use of language. Accordingly he is gathering up words, getting a vocabulary, familiarizing his mind with fit expressions of thought on the subject of discourse. These will come and go. He may neither know nor care whether he shall have use for any of them in the pulpit. In fact, however, he will spontaneously employ them to a large extent; for the simple reason that they constitute a track which his mind has recently pursued.

Certain parts of the sermon, especially the proposition and the divisions, whose size is inversely proportional to their importance, should be fixed in the mind with verbal precision. John Bright almost always prepared for exact reproduction the concluding sentences of a speech; and many able extemporaneous speakers have a similar habit. Some prefer to know beforehand at least what their very last sentence is to be. And there may be still other passages of the sermon that it would be well to prepare with verbal accuracy. A fine doctrinal distinction may need to be drawn, or an evil practice about which the congregation is peculiarly sensitive may have to be rebuked, or a sin which requires delicate treatment before a mixed audience may have to be dealt with. On such subjects the preacher must be frank and plain, while at the same time unusual care is required to avoid misstatements or needlessly offensive remarks. So he may feel unwilling, in these and similar instances, to commit himself to the use of such language as may come at call in the act of delivery.

Moreover, the pen may be used as a clarifier of ideas. In other words, not only will the plan of the sermon be jotted down, subordinate thoughts briefly indicated, and certain parts written out in full for memorizing; but here and there, all through the course of preparation, a thought may be fully written in order to make it clear and distinct to one's own

mind. Dr. D. H. Greer, in his Yale Lectures on Preaching ("The Preacher and his Place"), has given an excellent example in his own case: "I think with a pencil in my hand; and many of the thoughts as they come to me I try to express on paper, especially if, when they come to me, they are not very clear. . . . My purpose in writing, as far as I do write, is simply to make sure that I apprehend with distinctness the thought that is in my mind. I want to make sure that I have it, and not that I merely seem to have it; and the only way sometimes in which I can make sure that I have it is to try to write it. And so I go through with my subject, writing a little every now and then, sometimes more, sometimes less, as the subject seems to require, not for the sake of the writing, or because I expect to use it in preaching, for I do not, but for the sake of the thinking."

How long will it take? how many times shall the plan be reviewed and retouched? how full must the preparatory development be? Of course no specific answer can be given to such inquiries. Only this: The preparation should have become so familiar as to present itself freely at command in the pulpit; the preacher must be thinking forward to his object, not backward to his notes.

You will find, too, that almost or quite without exception the great extemporaneous preachers are also writers. "Very strongly do I warn all of you against reading your sermons," says Spurgeon to his "Students," "but I recommend as a most healthful exercise, and as a great aid toward obtaining extempore power, the frequent writing of them. Those of us who write a great deal in other forms, for the press, etc., may not so much require that exercise; but if you do not use the pen in other ways, you will be wise to write at least some of your sermons, and revise them with great care. Leave them at home afterward, but still write them out, that you may be preserved from a slipshod style." When Spurgeon was asked by Dr. Cuyler whether he ever wrote sermons, he answered

(hyperbolically), "I had rather be hung." Nevertheless the great extemporizer not only wrote freely for the press, but revised his sermons after the stenographer for publication, and in his earliest ministry even wrote most of them before delivery. Indeed, who can expect to be accurate in public speech without learning accuracy through the use of the pen? To objectify your thought, putting it out before the mind "in black and white," is to bring it forth from the region of the indefinite, the mental nebula, in which it generally arises, and to show what direction it is taking and with what weaknesses it suffers. Certainly there is a painfully large number of preachers who would preach better if they wrote more.

7. *To write the sermon in full and preach extempore.* This does not differ essentially from the mode of preparation just described. In other words, it is only the ordinary extemporaneous method expanded into its completest form; not something else, and not an excrescence, but a genuine development. Doubtless this extremely thorough preparation is not needed by all preachers; but a large number, I am convinced, might adopt it with advantage. Especially would it prove suitable for a time to many who believe themselves to have no extemporaneous gift, and who consequently make a habit of reading or reciting their sermons.

An easy experiment will show the availability of this method. Select in a book or a newspaper any piece that is at all interesting. Read it carefully, paying special attention to the order of thought. Then reproduce it in such language as occurs to you. Tell it to a friend, if you are so fortunate as to have one willing to be thus practised on. If not, speak it mentally or in an undertone to yourself. And now, instead of making the experiment on some one else's composition, experiment on something of your own, giving attention chiefly, as before, to the order of thought. Be careful and exact in your style of composition, but let the reproduction be spirited and free. If concise and strong, so much the better; but do not be sensitive to its defects.

I know a preacher who used to read Plutarch's "Lives" and then relate the story to his children,—for his own benefit as well as theirs. The greatest of Roman orators did not regard it beneath his dignity to employ a similar expedient: "When a youth, having selected some nervous piece of poetry, or read over such a portion of a speech as I could retain in my memory, I used to declaim upon what I had been reading, in other words chosen with all the judgment I possessed" ("De Oratore," Book I., ch. xxxiv.). These are good examples to follow; particularly when simple *talking*, either mental or articulate, is substituted for young Cicero's declamation.

But the preacher's path is never entirely free from difficulties and dangers. Here one danger is that he may depend partly on his recollection of the written words and partly on extemporization of language, and thus, with divided attention, "fall between two stools." Another danger is that, his verbal memory being too good, he may lapse into the habit of mere recitation. These dangers are real, but in most instances not to be greatly feared. Personally, after having followed this method more than any other, I have not found them formidable. If the preacher will pay much closer attention to the thoughts in their order than to the mere choice of words; will learn to throw sentences into various forms or substitute them with others (for the purpose of accustoming himself to the use of alternative expressions); will think of other things which he may or may not say, in addition to what he is writing; will, in the pulpit, when he catches himself reciting in a mechanical way, *quit reciting*,—he is not likely to become badly entangled in either of these snares.

Let me illustrate one of the processes just mentioned by an example. Suppose the first sentence of your sermon to be: "This parable was not delivered directly to either the disciples or the multitude, but to one man only, a certain lawyer, or scribe." Now the memoriter preacher would endeavor to fix this very language in his mind, so as to make it recur to him

in the pulpit just as it was written. Not so the preacher of whom I am now speaking. He would rather avoid this. So he says to himself: "This is only one way of expressing the thought; there are other ways; and the thought itself may be modified in this or that manner, or be omitted entirely. I may say in preaching, 'Most of our Lord's parables were spoken to a company of persons, but here we have an exception,' or, 'This parable was addressed to one man, a scribe who stood up and tempted Jesus,' or, 'The Divine Teacher spoke this parable to one of His tempters,'—and so on. Or I may leave out this sentence altogether—no matter, I am free to say what seems best at the time."

He *is* free, both in mind and tongue, and at the same time well furnished. For he will find that after having analyzed his text, evolved the theme, noted the chief points, put in subordinate thoughts and illustrations, written out the whole discourse in plain and appropriate language, gone over it mentally again and again, all the while allowing himself a more varied range of thought and language than the mere manuscript represents,—he may not know precisely what he has written, but he will know his subject. That will occupy and interest his mind; moreover, he will feel somewhat rich and capable in *words;* and, so far as intellectual preparation is concerned, he will be ready, not to recite, but in a truer sense to preach.

After a time he may find a less amount of verbal preparation sufficient.

LECTURE XXVIII

PERSONAL PREPARATION

THE sermon is not yet *made*. No matter though you now stand in the pulpit; no matter what truths you may have got hold of; no matter what work you may have done,—there is as yet no real sermon. Whatever it may be that lies before you in the form of written words, the sermon does not lie there. All that you have thus far accomplished is to prepare to preach: the preaching is the completed sermon. And it will no longer exist when the last word shall have died on the listener's ear, except in the fragmentary form of a manuscript or a series of reproducible ideas in your own or some hearer's mind. The man who has sent the preacher a note glowing with sincerest thanks and requesting a copy of "the sermon, which has done him so much good that he must have it with him always," reads the pages which the busy preacher has written out for him,—reads them once with a feeling of disappointment, and lays them aside to be read no more. As well hope to perpetuate the song that enchanted you, by having its words written and placed in your hands, even with the appropriate musical notation. It is only "the shattered stalks and ruined chrysalis" of sermon or song that have been left behind; the *psyche* has fled, or lives only in its effects upon the soul that is in you.

It is the human element in preaching that constitutes the peculiar power of delivery. It is *personal presence*. In the pulpit

there may or may not be some sort of manuscript; but there must be some sort of man. What manner of man, through the grace of God, in the experiences, choices, and habits of life, have you become? who preaches when you preach?

All through life have we been getting ready or else spoiling ourselves for this work. Have you spoken or acted the truth under temptation to lie? In that was something toward the making of an eloquent speaker. For sincerity went into the tones of your voice and the look of your eye: and sincerity is power. Note the significance of the following criticism by that keen yet kindly observer of public men, William H. Milburn: "The most accomplished speaker of the body was Judah P. Benjamin, of Louisiana, whose dialectic subtlety in reasoning was saved from obscurity by a rare power of clear statement, happy illustration, and crystalline style, while an insinuating, courtier-like manner, and a voice musical as was Apollo's lute, would have made him an orator of surpassing power, if you could have been satisfied of his sincerity." It was true, in like manner, of Disraeli that, with all his brilliant oratorical gifts, he failed to convince his audience, because of not making the impression that he himself believed what he said. "No one in the House of Commons could ever tell whether Disraeli had sincerity,—the key of all influence in oratory. Certainly he never gave any one the impression that he had it. He charmed, he intimidated, but never convinced adversaries."

Whenever you have eaten a "big dinner," you have animalized your soul; when you have commanded your body as a capable but often unruly servant, you have gained dominion over yourself and influence over others. Whenever you have listened sympathetically to the cry or the story of sorrow, and have reached out your hand in timely aid; whenever your heart has been moved with kindness toward a little child; whenever you have refused to be querulous and complaining, and to obtrude your personal troubles upon others; whenever,

even in the crushing sorrows of life, like godly and eloquent Aaron, you have held your peace,—by so much have you gained power to move the hearts of men by mingled manliness and sympathy. The same thing is true of moral enthusiasm, of a devotional spirit, of all spiritual life. In a word, it is possible day by day to make truth and love a part of our nature; and truth and love are the springs of eloquence. But do not grudge the necessary time.

> "It takes almost a year for an orange to grow,
> That a boy can eat in a minute.
> Through the long summer days
> How the sun's melting rays
> Have sweetened the juices within it!"

Eloquence is not a virtue. Theremin's famous argument on the subject breaks down under scrutiny into a fallacy of equivocation. But the noblest eloquence is, in the way just indicated, an *expression* of virtue. One's present self is the outcome of one's whole past life; and in preaching all the good that is in the character and spirit becomes effective. If, as some one has said, the education of a child should begin a hundred years before its birth, the education of a preacher should surely antedate the day on which he begins to "study for the ministry," and should continue to the end of his life.

The young preacher's imagination is often kindled with the idea of preaching as some mighty men of the pulpit have preached,—a Whitefield, a Robertson, a Chalmers. He has opened his mouth in private and given play to his powers. But the feebleness of his first public utterances is something remarkable to him, painfully surprising and humiliating. I hope you are not an entire stranger to some such experience: it may be a foretoken of power and success. But there is one fact whose significance you have probably failed to appreciate: you have not half considered the *man in the preaching*. As to such a preacher as Whitefield, you are not likely to become

very much like him, no matter what your personal character and life may be. No difficulty, indeed, in becoming as much of a reasoner; but in the gifts of emotional and dramatic oratory Whitefield was perhaps unsurpassed by any man that ever stood before an audience. Had he not been converted, he might have been, almost without effort, the greatest actor of his age. But supposing yourself to possess his gifts, or even greater, have you lived and are you now willing to live as he did? Think of his unceasing prayer and watchfulness, his boundless benevolence, his untiring zeal for God; seeking the way of salvation when a university student, so deeply in earnest as to lie "prostrate on the ground for whole days, in silent or vocal prayer"; swaying his multitudinous congregations, "at times so overwhelmed with a sense of God's infinite majesty that he was constrained to offer his soul as a blank for the divine hand to write on it what should please God"; on his first voyage to America, with an immoral ship's company, "preaching, reading prayers, catechizing the children, and ministering to the sick, with such zeal that before they reached Georgia the whole moral aspect of his floating congregation was changed"; the blood flowing from his mouth after preaching, more or less frequently, for the last nine years of his life; delivering, as his average number of sermons, fifteen a week for many years; making seven voyages to America, in the eighteenth century, to find his grave at last in a land of strangers three thousand miles from home. It was not Whitefield the consummate orator, but Whitefield the eloquent apostle of his Lord, whose word wakened the sleeping churches with their ease-loving pastors, and brought the godless multitude to their knees in terror and penitence before God. It was the spirit of Christ in him: it was the preaching of the Cross by one whose heart was breaking with love and sorrow for men, and who had not determined to know anything among them save Jesus Christ the Crucified.

I assume that yours is no unchristian or unworthy ideal

You would not be content to play upon the lighter emotions of a staring crowd, to deliver a mere sparkling declamation, or even to win the encomiums of the more intelligent. It is your aim not to stir men's blood, but their consciences. You know that the preacher has sadly failed whom people simply hear and praise. Eloquence is neither more nor less than the adaptation of a discourse to the conviction and persuasion of the hearers. Hence we do not speak of music as eloquent. So a speaker may be unto those that hear him "as a very lovely song of one that hath a pleasant voice and can play well on an instrument," and yet not be a truly eloquent man. The most beautiful song or picture or poem is the one that excites in the perceiving mind the largest quantity and the highest quality of esthetic pleasure. The most eloquent speech is the one that delivers the strongest pressure of persuasion upon the will of the hearer to turn him to the noblest ends. It is said that when Athanase Coquerel preached, the people were inclined to exclaim, "Bravo!" but on hearing Adolphe Monod they were ready to respond, "Amen!" Which was the more eloquent speaker?

If, then, your conscience is at peace with God in this matter, it is the preachers of real power to win men to the Cross whose example you would emulate. And this I would say: Acquaint yourself with their inner life, observe their daily walk, make some estimate of the constancy and abundance of their labors in the kingdom of heaven; and see how many exceptions you can find to the rule that a man's whole life must be tremulous with the latent lightning of divine power if he would have it blaze and strike in his speech.

One Christian grace in particular that you will note in these mighty men of the pulpit, is their *joyousness*. In almost every instance they have been men of a glad and cheerful heart. There is a certain buoyancy of spirit that has sustained them in the long endeavor of life, and made their presence everywhere a benediction. Wesley said of himself that ten thousand

cares sat as lightly on his mind as ten thousand hairs on his head. David Livingstone in Africa wrote home that "so far from being despondent, he found it necessary to suppress a tendency to levity." And thus it was through his whole thirty-three years of perilous labor and almost superhuman endurance. "Even when prostrated with fever his heart was always light." Sadness is incompetence. The preacher who glooms over his studies and along the streets and into the pulpit, will deliver a feeble and soggy sermon. Doubtless in the case of every faithful minister there will be inward groanings and prostrations, with strong cries and tears, again and again. But out of these may come a diviner joy, with victory and peace. So even the severest personal and ministerial trials furnish no reason why we should not work, though with the deepest seriousness, brightly, songfully. "The joy of the Lord shall be your strength." I know a preacher who says, "I was whipped into the ministry." A man of high moral tone and a genuine preaching genius, he seems to have attained but a moderate measure of success in his work. I have in mind another, far inferior to the first in ability, and showing no greater conscientiousness, who draws men into his congregation and wins them to the Saviour wherever he ministers. The gladdest moments of his life, so he has told me, are in the pulpit; but there and everywhere his appearance is that of one of the happiest men on earth. If we would preach strongly, the sermon must not be pitched in the minor key; it must have in it somewhat of the herald angel's song,—"Behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy."

Now we may hear it said, not without some signs of impatience: "I do not believe in so many discussions and rules; preaching should be simple and natural, and that's about the whole matter." And undoubtedly there is truth in the familiar complaint. Naturalness is a *sine qua non* of eloquence; "the heart of the wise teacheth his mouth." But for this very reason it is important that the preacher should have the right sort of

nature. For when it is said that to speak effectively a man must speak naturally, it is surely not meant that to speak in accordance with any nature whatever will be effective. We have no use for natural faults and defects, except to get rid of them,—as one would cure a diseased liver or a feeble limb. A cripple can do no better than to walk naturally, so long as he is a cripple; but is it unnatural that he should try to get well and strong? We are all naturally ignorant and depraved: are ignorance and depravity elements of power? We go astray from infancy, speaking lies: is eloquence, then, to be described as *lies on fire*, rather than as "truth on fire"? Naturally we cannot talk at all. Somebody had to teach us and we had to learn how to articulate words and to construct sentences. Left to untrained nature, the words of a Milton, a Bunyan, a Robert Hall, would have been grunts and groans and inarticulate cries. Words are not natural but arbitrary signs of ideas; and yet we should get on very awkwardly and in a most poverty-stricken manner without them. Certainly a man must speak naturally; but he will speak to little purpose till he has made many acquisitions. The song of the bird is natural: Jenny Lind had to learn hers. Our humbler friends of the fields and woods have many reason-mocking instincts; we have none. Our distinction is in the possibilities of our nature,—that we can learn, can grow, can *become* even unto eternity. Life to a man is growth and education, a continual becoming.

Train your body to health, to activity, to grace of manner and movement. Establish the habit of deep, full breathing. This will not only improve your general health by the more perfect aëration of the blood, but will certainly increase your lung-power and the strength of your voice. A suitable breathing exercise, taken not less than three hours after a meal, will be decidedly serviceable. Even a few deep inhalations just before speaking adds appreciably to one's ease and force of utterance. Breathe *through your nose;* or, as the throat-doctors

say, "Shut your mouth and live." If you stammer, as did Curran, the famous Irish orator, in his boyhood ("Stuttering Jack Curran," he was called); or if your speech be thick and indistinct (like that of a famous American orator of whom it was said that when he was a boy one could hardly tell whether he spoke Choctaw or English), determine that it shall not be so. Accustom yourself to an erect carriage, not lounging or walking stoop-shouldered. Let these things become habitual in your physical life; and then speak naturally.

Enrich your mind with knowledge, train it to accuracy of thought and readiness of utterance; and speak naturally.

Above all, be filled with the Holy Spirit; let the Word of Christ dwell in you richly; though the outward man perish, do you yourself *live*, renewed in righteousness and love from day to day; and then before the congregation speak right out naturally the truth that has become your own. It depends on what we are whether our natural speech will be effective.

You may safely dismiss all prejudice against the study of elocution,—or, as it is now more suggestively called, *expression*. Is not public speaking an art? The ancient classic orators cultivated it with great assiduity; and so have many of their most prominent successors—Whitefield, for example—in modern times. No objection can be brought against the art of expression that could not be urged with equal propriety against music, grammar, and many other arts of acknowledged utility. All our teachers, indeed, when we come to understand them, believe in it; even Whately, whose well-known argument on the subject is directed against a false system of elocutionary culture, and not against the true; even Phillips Brooks, although he declines to say anything of "the marvelous ways of those who teach it," and believes in the true teacher somewhat as he believes "in the existence of Halley's comet, which comes into sight of this earth once in about seventy-six years."

The study of elocution does seem to damage some young speakers by fixing their attention on the manner of speaking;

whereas it is essential that the whole mind shall be absorbed in the objects properly before it.

> "The centipede was happy quite
> Until the toad for fun
> Said, 'Pray, which foot comes after which?'
> This worked her mind to such a pitch
> She lay distracted in a ditch,
> Considering how to run."

But where is the art or science that does not at some stage give rise to similar crudities? Sometimes when we hear young men at college talk of "*sitting* a chair in front of the fire," or of somebody's "sending a message to you and *I*," we are inclined to believe that the attention they have given, perhaps for a half-score of years, to the grammar of their native tongue, has not been wholly beneficial. I know of an old-time teacher in the Pine Hills who, through some mistaken notion as to the scope of a rule of syntax, discarded entirely the use of the word *is*, invariably substituting the plural form, and teaching his pupils that "*is* are not correct." Nevertheless, who is unwilling to retain English grammar in our courses of instruction? Medicine often makes the patient sick while curing his disease. When the elocutionary "rule" has become, through practice, a part of yourself, of your own mind and nerve and muscle, it will no longer be thought of, but will have added itself to your personal unconscious power.

The true study and practice of the art of expression will give you clearer insight into the principles, which are divinely established laws, of all effective discourse; will shame away many a fault; will strengthen your command of both muscle and mind; in a word, will tend to make you a self-possessed, self-forgetful, and thoroughly natural speaker. Are your lips flexible? is your enunciation distinct? has your voice sufficient compass? is your pronunciation correct (do you say "cloze" or "clo*th*es"? "srine" or "s*h*rine"? "hunderd" or "hun-

d*red*" ? "bretheren" or "bre*thr*en" ?)? Learn your defects under the best accessible guidance of book or living teacher, and be willing to correct them. Covet excellence in all the elements of expression. Why should any one say it is not worth while? But the neglect of it has two powerful allies in the hearts of most young speakers: one is vanity and the other is indolence. For the acquisition of any great art requires a frank acknowledgment of our deficiencies, and diligent, persevering effort at improvement.

But there must also be some *specific* personal preparation to preach. Opportunity must be given to gather up the energies and concentrate them on the work in hand. No matter how good a scythe the mower may swing, it may be well for him to whet it before beginning his swath.

There is a physical preparation. Very strenuous is the use to which the body is subjected in preaching the Gospel. Brain and nerves are tasked to the utmost: let them be in the best possible condition.

A common mistake is to enter the pulpit tired. Indeed, it is well to avoid fatigue, as far as practicable, at all times. Weariness is weakness; often it is irritability and fretfulness. You need not go so far as a noble Christian woman who regarded it "a disgrace to be tired and wicked to be sick." But there is no little wisdom in her exaggerated statement of a principle of conduct. Vary your work; do it with a cheerful heart; observe the laws of health; and look upon a sense of lassitude as discreditable rather than interesting. Make it a rule at least to drag no dead weight of a body into the pulpit. Otherwise, no matter how perfect your intellectual preparation may be, your exhausted nerves, prod and belabor them as you may, will not respond either to the audience without or to the soul within.

In the case of most men the worst day of the week for whatever really hard work may be necessary to pulpit preparation is Saturday; and decidedly the worst fragment of a day

is Sunday morning. Dr. David H. Greer has said that, while some people have a notion that Sunday is the only real work-day for preachers, it is to *him* the easiest day in the week, the day in which he has the least to do. Dr. Deems's Sunday morning sermon was ready by Friday night, and was then dismissed from mind. Saturday was a day, not, indeed, of idleness, but of nerve-rest; and on awaking Sunday morning he could hardly wait in his eagerness for the hour of preaching.

It is Dr. Cuyler's rule "never to touch a sermon by lamplight." Beecher also believed that the habit of night-study shortens the lives of ministers and weakens the tone of their work. But "it is especially bad," he held, "for a preacher to prepare his sermon on Saturday night. It is bad for a man to keep his brain at the top of its power from early on Saturday till late at night, so that he sleeps in a fiery dream of sermon." The great pulpit genius and political orator was right. Not that the mind ever becomes tired; but the brain does, and cannot do its work again till it is rested.

Following such examples, you will find that Monday, instead of being "blue," will be the best day of the whole week for getting fresh thought for sermons.

As to your eating habits with reference to the pulpit, I need say but a word. It is obvious that we must not have the nervous force engaged about a stomach full of food, when every vibration of it is needed in the brain. A light and easily digested meal, or a mere fragment of one, or none at all, before preaching, always. I have known but one preacher who said that he ate as much as his appetite called for, whether at this time or at any other; and the character of his preaching was not such as to commend his example to others. Quintilian declines giving any admonition on the subject of speaking with the stomach heavy with a full meal, on the ground that he cannot suppose that any "man who retains possession of his senses would be guilty of such folly."

Of immediate intellectual preparation for the pulpit I have already spoken sufficiently in other connections. But I must ask you to give heed, above all, to the preparation of the *heart.*

Let each sermon sink deep down in our hearts before we undertake the communication of it to others. Let it renew our consciousness of the indwelling Christ. Let it search our consciences. "Thou therefore that teachest another, teachest thou not thyself?" It is a time for repentance. Is there a sin about which we hesitate to preach fairly and fully, because we ourselves have come under its dominion? Is there a wasteful and injurious physical habit—such as the use of tobacco, for example—concerning which self-indulgence has closed our lips? Is there a duty which, because of personal neglect, we cannot heartily inculcate? Let us humble ourselves before the Lord; and the "due time" when He exalts us, according to His word, will be the time to preach. Have earthly cares and ambitions returned upon us, or the insidious spirit of carnal ease crept back into the soul, so that the kingship of Christ is threatened? How can we preach Him as Saviour and Lord till we have consciously enthroned Him again? Even though our walk has been close with God in purity and in peace, we shall still wish to preach every sermon to ourselves first of all. The first and the most teachable audience should be the preacher.

Stand on the topmost rock of the Peaks of Otter; far below see the great trees as shrubs, and men as pigmies, and dwelling-houses as doll-houses, and villages as white and brown splotches on the dim, green landscape; think of the busy, multiform, anxious human life upon whose scene you are gazing,—and how small does it all appear, and how vast the heavens above and the universe in which our earth is but a pebble on an infinite shore! So do all earthly interests and anxieties appear as a very little thing to the soul that has climbed far above them, while the Cross of Christ and Judg-

ment and God are revealed in their eternal worth and greatness. Thus our vanity shrinks and shrivels away; the petty and obtrusive sinful self is crucified; we are not our own. We come to the waiting congregation in the house of God as from another house of God, holier and more glorious; we come as prophets and apostolic witnesses who cannot but speak the things they have heard and seen. "Which voice we heard when we were with Him on the holy mount."

Shall we seek, then, an overpowering sense of responsibility? No; not an overpowering sense. That will benumb the faculties of speech. In our solemn consciousness of duty let there be the prevailing note of sympathy, love, and joy. Let not our faces be rigid with a dead solemnity; let us count it a joy to appear before the people with the words of eternal life. That will set the faculties free for winning and effective speech. Dr. Charles F. Deems, after nearly fifty years of preaching, said that he still had a sense of responsibility that "frightened" him, as in his earliest ministry,—"so that I never even now go into the pulpit without it, and sometimes it is so severe that I am on the point of running across the river to Jersey and letting things go as they will." Yet who ever preached the Gospel in a more genial spirit, or with more apparent personal enjoyment?

What kind of preaching can the man do that has to force himself into the pulpit and lash his soul into some fervor of emotion? There must be fullness of thought and earnest desire,—together with the feeling, "I cannot preach," an urgency of utterance that will not be restrained. The apostle's "Who is sufficient for these things?" but interblended with this the same apostle's "*I long to see you*, that I may impart unto you some spiritual gift, to the end ye may be established." Even lion-hearted Martin Luther declared that he trembled whenever he ascended the pulpit; but what earthly power short of physical coercion could ever have kept him out of it? It was the ancient prophet's experience: "Then said I, Ah, Lord God,

behold, I cannot speak; for I am a child." And yet he *must;* for—"The Lord put forth His hand and touched my mouth. And the Lord said unto me, Behold, I have put My words in thy mouth." So Jeremiah spoke, and could not keep silent; and his words, God's words from his mouth, were a flame of fire.

Read Simpson's "Lectures on Preaching," Matheson's "Voices of the Spirit," Richard Cecil's "Remains."

LECTURE XXIX

THE TWOFOLD ACTION IN SPEECH

IT is plain enough that for the principles of eloquence we must go back of voice and gesture to the man himself. It is not the body that is eloquent, but the soul. Nevertheless the soul is embodied, and can reach its fellow-men through the body only. Let the most powerful speaker on earth have his tongue paralyzed, his eyes put out, and the skin of his face burned off: the soul within may glow and strive, may be beautiful and mighty with great truths and tender sympathies and highest impulses of utterance, but all to no purpose. The means of communication are wanting.

Similarly if the complexion be cloudy, the features inexpressive, the voice feeble or strained or husky or hollow, the gesture meaningless or distracted,—whatever the physical defect, by so much is the soul embarrassed in the transmission of oratorical power. To the writer the physical elements of influence are not available; but to the speaker they are indispensable. The light within will shine in vain if the vessel be not translucent.

We have to consider, then, both the action of the body and that of the soul—instrument and agent—in speech.

I. Voice, facial expression, and gesture are the **Bodily Actions:** and so, through the noblest two of the senses,—*hearing*, the most penetrative and enrapturing, and *sight*, the most intellectual and refined,—through waves of air and of ether, the energy of the soul is transmitted to other souls in its presence.

Friendship has learned to utilize another sense, the pressure of the hand, the *touch;* but this means of personal contact oratory must forego.

I shall attempt no more in this connection than the rather ungracious task of emphasizing some of the physical faults of speech. These, in fact, are innumerable: with every new speaker some new fault may be expected to appear. Besides, they are often but the external symptoms of an oratorically feeble or diseased action of the soul. The cure must go deeper than the symptoms: nevertheless we may be sure that it is not effected so long as these remain.

Let me note, then, with a word or two of emphasis, a few familiar faults.

1. As to voice:

To begin on too low or too high a key (as bad in a sermon as in a song). Begin with the middle voice; that is to say, on the key naturally taken in animated, not excited, conversation. From this line the voice may rise and to it return, as feeling may prompt, without degenerating into a squeaking falsetto in one direction or a guttural murmur in the other. Especially to be avoided is the attempt to make the farthest-off persons in the audience hear, by raising the key of the voice. Such an attempt is likely to prove fatal to all ease and effectiveness of delivery. Put more *force* into the voice, and thus project it, on the same key, to the required distance.

To confound the ideas of loudness and distinctness. The sound of a bell will go farther and will be more easily recognized than the noise of a falling belfry. "There is a kind of voice naturally qualified to make itself heard, not by its strength, but by a peculiar excellence of tone" (Quintilian).

To speak in a monotone, or in a monotonous succession of whisperings and bawlings, or in a cantillating, recitative, sing-song tone.

To speak in any acquired "tone." "The greatest fault of all," says Wesley, "is the speaking with a tone,—in some in-

stances womanish and squeaking; in others, singing or canting; in others, high, swelling, and theatrical; in others, awful and solemn; and in others, odd, whimsical, and whining."

To allow the lungs to become exhausted of air, not filling them in the momentary pauses of speech; to fill them audibly; to let a large quantity of breath (the raw material which is to be made into sound) escape unvocalized; to distress the ears of all hearers with the "vocule."

To destroy the sense of passages by mechanical emphasis and inflections (by the falling inflection, e.g., where the rising is required); to try to emphasize almost every word, which will result in emphasizing almost none; to let the voice fall needlessly at the end of sentences; to swallow some parts of words.

To scream. Vociferation may or may not be a mark of earnestness: it is never an effectual means of persuasion. Oratory is not violent. Mention the name of any great preacher that has been a screamer. Some of Patrick Henry's most powerful appeals were said to have had "almost the stillness of solitary thinking." Wesley's famous charge to one of his American preachers is not yet obsolete: "Scream no more, at the peril of your soul. God now warns you by me whom He has set over you. Speak as earnestly as you can, but do not scream. Speak with all your heart, but with a moderate voice. It was said of our Lord, 'He shall not cry'; the word properly means 'He shall not scream.' Herein be a follower of me, as I am of Christ. I often speak loud, often vehemently; but I never scream."

To suppose that mere rapidity of utterance is a sign of feeling and vivacity. It may show the lack of life, mechanicalness, —as seems to be the case often in the repeating of the Lord's Prayer and other familiar forms of worship.

To suppose that extreme slowness is a sign of deliberation and profound thought. It may be a sign of the absence of thought. Stupidity is slow.

To speak precipitately, so as to fail of all impressiveness, or to speak so sluggishly as to become a weariness to every active-minded hearer; to speak out of time with the sentiment (as, e.g., to pronounce pathetic passages rapidly or impassioned passages deliberately).

To pronounce pathetic passages in a loud, high tone. Pathos will have the minor key or none.

To speak through the nose,—or rather *not* through the nose.

To speak with the mouth hardly open and the lips well-nigh motionless.

To speak while using the handkerchief about the mouth or nose.

To take frequent sips of water, to expectorate, to clear the throat needlessly.

2. As to facial expression, attitude, and motion:

To overlook the significant fact that every hearer is also a spectator, and instinctively feels that he would lose much were he to listen with his eyes shut.

To hold the head in any unnatural position. "For by casting down the head humility is signified; by throwing it back, haughtiness; by leaning it on one side, languor; by keeping it rigid and unmoved, a certain degree of rudeness" (Quintilian).

To have the face fixed in wooden rigidity, instead of facile to every sentiment as it is felt and uttered; to have it distorted as if in pain.

To speak with closed eyes, or to look away from the people. Through the eyes souls look forth, to see and to be seen by others. Even to cover the eyes with glasses, either through necessity or choice, is to drop a curtain before the windows of the soul. But of course the sympathetic look of the orator is not a stare, not looking a man out of countenance.

To put the hands in the pockets or in any other part of the clothing; to slap them audibly together; to fling them about wildly; to saw the air.

To gesticulate habitually with the palm of the hand down-

ward; to clench the fist, or to point with the index-finger, meaninglessly; to slap the thigh; to pound the Bible; to use a fan, no matter how sultry the weather.

To gesticulate habitually with the hands higher than the head or lower than the heart; to gesticulate with eye-glasses, handkerchief, or anything else in the hand.

To sway from side to side; to swagger; to shrug the shoulders; to twist and shake the body; to lean on the pulpit-desk for support.

To address the people on the right of the pulpit, to the neglect of those on the left; to turn the back on the audience, for the benefit of some brother in the pulpit.

To place the feet so as to make the posture unsteady, either by twisting one foot round the other, or in any other way; to bend the knees; to stand on tiptoe, "as if accustomed to addressing audiences over a high wall"; to place the feet too far apart.

To walk the platform. Pacing to and fro is either a restless or a meditative exercise. Restlessness is dispersion of energy; oratory concentrates. And meditation is for the study; the Peripatetics were philosophers, not orators.

To indulge in any mannerism of speech or gesture: that is to say, in any manner that is manner only.

To try at any time to express more than you feel, attempting to give that which you do not have. It is untruthful and vain to elevate the voice and strike out violently with the hands while passion lies fast asleep.

Now the knowledge of your defects and blunders in delivery need not dishearten you; for "he who makes no mistakes makes nothing else." It should excite that diligent and earnest care through which only they can be corrected.

II. But if the real speaker is the soul,—if the true *logos* is within, not on the lips or the air,—what we have chiefly to consider is the **Action of the Soul in Speech.**

What is the fundamental principle of this movement? The

word that most nearly expresses it is *self-abandonment*, with its complementary term, *self-concentration*. To no one is the German proverb more applicable than to the public speaker: "Do not be miserly with yourself." Eloquence is a secret, to be sure,—a mystery, a simple, indefinable gift of God, like music, poetry, beauty, love. But here we come closest to its hiding-place. No man was ever eloquent, just as no man was ever happy, by directly trying to be. The conscious effort must be directed toward an entirely different and far greater object. The speaker is to be thinking only about convincing his hearers and persuading them to choose and act as he wills. If the eloquence which is tributary to this end does not then arise of itself, he may rest assured that it could not otherwise have been produced. Self-attention must forever keep it down. The speaker of whom the criticism may be justly made, "He listens to himself while he speaks," must be uninspiring and feeble.

Nor is oratory in this matter an exception, as compared with other great arts. "The power of the masters is in self-annihilation." What spoils very much of the music we hear? The interest of the musician in himself or in the manner of his playing, when his soul should be absorbed in the music. "A panting man thinks of himself as a clever swimmer; but a fish swims much better and takes his performance as a matter of course." We never do anything thoroughly well till the mere manner or fact of doing it has become, like the fish's swimming, a matter of course and unthought of. Does not the principle hold good even of that art which is so far above all others that we do not call it by their name,—the divine art of benevolence? A man does you a favor of whose value he shows himself distinctly conscious,—he has calculated every pennyworth of it,—and you would rather it had been left undone. But some one offers you a service because it is in his heart to do so; the light of love and kindness is on his face, and he himself unaware that "the skin of his face doth shine." That deed sinks deep

in your heart. It is the unconscious ministration of goodness that wins and subdues; it is love that is mighty. Therefore, "If I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, but have not love, I am become sounding brass, or a clanging cymbal."

The speaker has a certain definite quantum of energy; never too much, never enough for the full accomplishment of his purpose. It is fatal to waste more than half of it on himself. I was impressed with an incidental remark of a lady who told me recently of having heard two distinguished preachers from England: "They seemed to care for nothing but to deliver their Master's message." Could these men ever have gained the power of persuasive speech that has given them celebrity in all the churches if their preaching had been for self-display? Of Canon Liddon it was said that he "spoke like one possessed," utterly self-oblivious, rapt, completely identified with the work he was doing. And—as one result—up to the very close of his ministry about five thousand people came regularly to hear him.

All statements and remarks by the preacher concerning his own dispositions and the manner in which he is treating his subject are contrary to the spirit of self-abandonment. "I feel my inadequacy properly to present this subject," "For lack of time I shall here have to omit several important considerations," "You will notice that I have not insisted,"—all such expressions, innocent as they may seem, betray the preacher's desire to set *himself* right with his hearers, or his consciousness of his own moods and methods rather than of the truth he is delivering. The *what*, the *to whom*, and the *what for* of preaching are lost in the *how*.

It is equally bad to be thinking about one's physical comfort in the pulpit. I have seen a preacher fan himself serenely all through a sermon on self-denial and Christian consecration. It reminds one of the man who wrote a book against ambition, and fronted the title-page with his own likeness. Such self-

nursing! Let us be so interested and absorbed in what we stand before the people for as to make it impossible.

A vexatious difficulty with young speakers, and on special occasions with many older speakers, is that result of self-attention which is known as *embarrassment*. It is a crushing experience: to feel one's subject strongly in the study, to be eager for the speaking hour, and then to feel nothing before the audience but feebleness and fear. In proportion as this state of feeling prevails, all freedom and force of delivery are out of the question. The audience is the unwilling master, and the speaker the unwilling slave and trembling coward before it.

Now it is pertinent to inquire to what extent this painful trepidation may be owing to vanity. Ask yourself, "Why am I more embarrassed before intelligent than before rude hearers? why will just one distinguished stranger confuse me? If I knew that the audience had never heard of me and would never think of me again, would their presence embarrass me?" The answer of conscience may bring you to your knees; and surely there is no better attitude in which either to keep off or to overcome an oratorical error which is at the same time a moral delinquency. Realizing before God his position as an ordained messenger to sinful men, how can a minister of the Gospel stand confused or afraid in the presence of any man or any assembly? Norman Macleod wrote to his wife, concerning a sermon he had delivered at Balmoral before the royal family: "I preached without a note the same sermon I preached at Morven; and I never looked once at the royal seat, but solely at the congregation. I tried to forget the great ones I saw, and to remember the great Ones I saw not, and so I preached from my heart, and with as much freedom really as at a mission station." Even this great-minded preacher had to make an effort to keep the simple thought of duty and opportunity before him—"I tried to forget the great ones"; but it was successful, and at the close of the letter he could say, "In after-years teach your boy

this lesson,—not to seek his work, but to receive it when given him, and to do it *to God without fear*."

But better even than this sense of our position as ambassadors of Christ is the constraining power of love and solicitude for those to whom we have been sent. Pray such a prayer as that of Samuel Walker of Truro: "Lord, turn the fear of men's faces into a love of their souls." Love will make its way. It is not timid and nerveless, but steady, serene, daring. In the soul, as in material bodies, a right center of movement prevents agitation and secures peace and power.

True, the speaker may be saved from the trepidation of embarrassment by self-assertion, by brazen effrontery, by a strong will bent on the accomplishment of a selfish purpose; but he may be saved from it also by self-denial and devotion to an unselfish and holy purpose. Which path of deliverance we should choose is not a question, either in oratory or in morals.

But there may be other causes of embarrassment. The orator is sensitive. He keenly feels the presence of other men. He is modest and deferential before them. He is tremblingly alive to the extraordinary demands of his position,—hundreds of souls before him, and he alone on his feet to open his lips and break the oppressive silence. A preacher once told me that never in all his life, in conversation, in preaching, in any circumstances whatever, had he experienced the feeling of embarrassment. But I have no reason to believe him freer from vanity than many others; and it is certain that he lacked the characteristic sensitiveness of the orator. So far, then, as the feeling of embarrassment comes from the sympathetic tremor of a speaking soul standing before others listening in silence, it need not be deplored, but only controlled. In itself a weakness, it is nevertheless significant of a certain condition of power. It is not like the soldier's agitation in the awful hush that precedes the storm of battle, or when the first horrible shells come shrieking through the ranks. The soldier's agitation shows no qualification to kill men while they are trying to

kill him; and hence is no sign of fitness for his work. But the tremor that shakes the orator's nerves as he first faces his audience is an expression of fitness for the work before him,—fitness to feel the presence of souls, and to touch them with some touch of quickening power.

The greatest speakers seem to know all about this experience. Curran, the Irish orator, did—at least in the beginning of his career. Speaking to a friend about one of his first appearances before an audience, he said: "There were only six or seven persons present, and the room could not have contained as many more; yet was it, to my panic-struck imagination, as if I were the central object in nature, and assembled millions were gazing upon me in breathless expectation. I became dismayed and dumb." I have heard John B. Gough declare that he never faced an audience without a shaking of the knees. Cicero had made a similar confession two thousand years before: "Indeed, what I observe in you, I very frequently experience in myself, that I turn pale in the outset of my speech, and feel a tremor through my whole thoughts, as it were, and limbs. When a young man I was once so timid in commencing an accusation that I owed to Q. Maximus the greatest of obligations for immediately dismissing the assembly, as soon as he saw me absolutely disheartened and incapacitated through fear" ("De Oratore," Book I., ch. xxvi.). Hawthorne, in his "English Note-book," tells of a conversation between Lord Bulwer and a certain discouraged speaker who feared he would never be able to get command of an audience, because it seemed so hard to get command of himself. "Do you feel your heart beat," asked Bulwer, "when you are going to speak?" "Yes." "Do all your ideas forsake you?" "Yes." "Do you wish the floor to open and swallow you?" "Yes." "*Why, then, you will make an orator.*"

But inasmuch as the feeling of embarrassment, whether with or without encouraging significance, is self-conscious, the immediate effect is damaging.

LECTURE XXX

THE ACTION OF THE SOUL—ON SUBJECT, AUDIENCE, OBJECT

LET us now spend half an hour in looking somewhat more particularly at the positive principle corresponding to oratorical self-abandonment. This abandonment of one's self is for the sake of *self-concentration* upon three things:

1. **Upon the Subject.**

No matter what may have been the kind and amount of preparation given to the sermon,—whether without a single written or memorized word, or resulting in a full manuscript laid in the open Bible before you,—the subject is *your* subject; you have it in hand *now*, and are concerned with none other whatsoever. Your thoughts will sometimes flit away, just as they would often play the vagrant in the preparation to preach. But let it be distinctly forbidden. Think your subject, and no other.

One stimulus you will feel in the pulpit that was lacking in the study,—the stimulus of an emergency. Utter absence of mind now must mean total failure (unless, indeed, the mechanical and meaningless reading of a manuscript be accepted as in some measure a success). The study was an inland pool: your boat is now on the open sea, and must ride the waves or perish.

Though your stock of mental energy be extraordinary (and is it?), you have none to spare for alien ideas. Concentrate on your theme. Become strongly conscious of it. Thus

through thought sensibility will be set aglow, and appropriate language will come of itself. Here every demonstration that you have ever followed in mathematics will be helpful,—every hour of patient thought on any subject. On the other hand, every hour of aimless reverie or indulgence of a wandering mind in your studies, will administer its measure of retributive justice by weakening your delivery. But whatever the degree of mental discipline attained, necessity is now laid upon you; a crisis has been reached; and you must will to see that truth and no other which you are preaching now.

2. **Upon the Audience.**

Even the writer cannot afford to be wholly occupied with his theme. In imagination he must see his composition under the eye of the reader, and must so write as to win the reader's attention and convey the desired influence to his mind. Said a poet in old age, writing to a friend concerning his latest book: "I don't know of any reason I had for publishing it, save a yearning desire to speak to my friends once more." If it be so with the writer, much more must the preacher in his study see his "friends" in the congregation, and be talking with them. But above all the speaker when actually before his audience, must be sensitively conscious of their presence.

I once heard the complaint of some members of a plain country congregation against their two pastors—of whom I was one—that they "seemed to be studying so hard in the pulpit." There is reason to believe the objection not ill-founded. From insufficient preparation, or from lack of sympathy with their hearers, or from both causes, these preachers were inclined to use the pulpit as a thinking-place rather than a speaking-place. Their faces wore the look of thought, not of speech; of monologue, not of dialogue. Their eyes were fixed, abstracted, dry, instead of moist and sparkling with human sympathy. They were not enough like Robert McCheyne: "He spoke from the pulpit as one earnestly occupied with the souls before him. He made them feel sym-

pathy with what he spoke, for his own eye and heart were on them." Our commission is not to soliloquize upon the Gospel in the presence of the people, but to preach it *to* them. Nor is it that of the poet,—expression for its own sake; but expression *to men*, and for the sake of gaining them for God.

Imagine a successful lawyer falling into this mood of abstractedness while pleading at the bar. The accounts given us of such wonderful forensic geniuses, for instance, as Thomas Erskine and Rufus Choate emphasize the intentness with which, while all aflame with their theme, they kept reading the faces of the jury and plying them with argument and appeal, till the most impassive showed signs of sympathy and conviction. We cannot think of an earnest advocate as so interested in simply unfolding his cause and talking about it to himself that he practically ignores the judges before him, with whom alone the decision rests. Equally impossible would it be to imagine a powerful preacher delivering his sermon without a prevailing consciousness of direct address to the congregation.

A speaker before his audience is not a scientific investigator,—not an Archimedes. See the rapt old mathematician, seventy-four years of age, deep in his studies during the siege of Syracuse, the city in which he is living. The time seems all unfavorable for profound thought; but to him no time is unfavorable. The final assault is made; the city falls; the Roman soldiers rush into his room. "Do not disturb my circles," says the absorbed and delighted thinker; and receives his mortal wound. Socrates would probably have seized the opportunity to have a talk with the soldiers. We use thoughts *upon men*, and as preachers have no other use for them whatever. The speaker is not an Archimedes with his circles, but rather an Ole Bull with his violin. When one of his hearers was talking with the wonderful violinist about the effect of a certain piece—"The Mother's Prayer"—which had brought tears to all eyes the evening before, "Do you know," he replied, "that I do not produce these effects by the mere sound of my

violin? I produce them by the direct action of my mind upon the minds of the audience. I employ the tones of the instrument simply for the purpose of opening the channels through which I myself act upon them." How he did this the great artist could not explain; but that his mental attitude toward the audience was the right attitude for both musician and orator there cannot be the shadow of a doubt.

Here is one reason why an apostrophe, unless it be very brief and emotional,—in a word, *inevitable*,—is out of place in public speech. It is a speaking, not to the people, but only at them. It is an attempt, often painfully unnatural, to address an imaginary hearer in their presence. I once heard a very sensible young preacher apostrophize the patriarch Job in the following strain:

"Ah, Job! go forth and sever thyself from thy fellows. Depart from the habitation of man. Forsake thy loved companions that still remain. Betake thee to the ash-heap and the ruins without the gate; make thy dwelling in the noisome tomb; be bedfellow to the moldering skeleton and fit companion for bats and owls. Thy skin shall dry and burst in cracks innumerable. Thy flesh shall rot and fall from thy bones. Thy joints shall rust and petrify. Thy hair shall bleach to an unnatural whiteness, and drop from thy skull. Thine eyes shall canker and thy sight forsake thee. Thy moldering teeth shall crumble and thy breath shall foul the atmosphere. Thy voice shall harsher grow, as the blight turns toward thine inward parts, until at last, flesh and even bones a mas of living corruption, thou shalt indeed experience a physical hell on earth, and drop into a loathsome grave, unwept, unhonored, and unsung."

Not a badly written apostrophe; but I venture to say that it did not long hold its place in the sermon.

Eloquence is colloquial. It takes two to make a bargain, a quarrel, or a speech. The speaker cannot get on satisfactorily without continual responses to his arguments and appeals. This is why the figure of "interrogation" is so much more

natural and frequent in speech than in writing. For interrogation is really an interlocutory process in which half is inaudible. The early Christian homily was in many cases an actual dialogue between the preacher and his hearers. The same was true of the address in the Jewish synagogue. Especially when anything displeasing was said, the hearer did not hesitate to ask questions and to express dissent. The sermon, rising into a higher form than these discourses, should nevertheless retain the spirit of the dialogue.

Sometimes the hearer replies with applause,—for example, to a political speaker or a popular lecturer. In the congregations of Chrysostom and other eloquent preachers of the primitive church such applause was a common occurrence. In Methodist congregations audible religious responses—not applause—were frequently given, in former times, to sustain and stimulate the speaker. "The freedom of the Methodist usage of public worship," says Dr. Phelps, "which permits the hearer to give vent to his own emotions awakened by the voice of the preacher, has this to say in its defense: that it is grounded in the nature of all eloquence. The reticence of Calvinistic assemblies is so far unnatural in that it stifles the dramatic nature of oral discourse, and tends to reduce it to a monologue." Audible or simply visible responses are expected and are received by the true preacher,—a flush or a shadow on the face, a look of thoughtfulness, a trembling lip, a glistening eye. He is fain to cease speaking unless there be speaking faces respondent. It is this feeling that prompts the preacher sometimes to turn his back on the congregation, and address some brother minister in the pulpit,—an abominable habit, but originating in a true instinct of eloquent speech. That is poor speaking which is done by the speaker alone.

You will have apathetic hearers: some disposed to drop their eyes or to look carelessly here and there; some looking you straight in the face, but really paying no attention; some more or less antipathetic, making criticisms and filing objec-

tions. But there will also be hearers like-minded with yourself, attentive, *eloquent*. Some faces will be as a billet of wood or a damp cloud, but others will be sunshine and magnetism. You will soon learn where to find these quickening faces in the congregation; and it will be wise to avail yourself of all the help they can render. Let them give back, with the added force of their own conviction and sympathy, the truth you are delivering to them. Especially in moments of heaviness, when it seems impossible to feel or speak with any power, lift up your heart to God for His inspiration, and for human inspiration turn toward the eyes through which responsive souls are looking.

Not that the preacher should pass by and ignore the unsympathetic hearer. It is said that Rubenstein had the music so chilled out of him by the sight of indifferent and yawning auditors that he formed the habit of keeping his eyes fixed on the keyboard of his piano. But you must be able to do better than the famous pianist. Gather power to *face* indifference. By no means turn away from the man who turns away from you. Speak to him (not however about his inattentiveness). Use upon him the strength that you get from other sources. Win back the averted eyes. Elicit the reluctant response. It might be expedient even to give your whole attention for a few moments to the man who is looking at his watch; and while thus silently reproving his impoliteness, find a useful hint for yourself in his painful consciousness of duration. And should there be disorder in the congregation—either thoughtless or deliberate disturbance—it is the part of the masterful speaker to control it by the gentlest and most considerate exercise of authority. Administer no harsh rebuke. Show no irritation of feeling. A few moments' pause, or a few respectful words, will reinstate the reign of order, and restore the most ungracious spirits to good behavior.

We frequently speak of keeping "in touch" with people,—with fellow-workers, for example, in some good cause. The

phrase, though now somewhat overworked, is peculiarly significant. There is great nicety and discriminative power in the sense of touch. All men exert it constantly, and in quite an indefinable manner. The wheelman cannot tell you just how he maintains his balance on the bicycle; the organist, just how he knows with what force to press the keys; the penman, just how he graduates the pressure of his pen upon the paper. They somehow *feel their way.* Similarly there is a delicacy of mental perception. We have the power to feel with our minds the mental condition of those with whom we associate. Just how we cannot tell; but it is a faculty which we are all the time exercising; and like the sense of physical touch, it is capable of the highest cultivation. You may have met with persons who had very little of it. They were continually blundering. They knew neither the right thing to say, nor the right time to say it. They missed the opportunity of influence, and even repelled and offended those whom they would have won. Have you not known others who seemed to feel the very thoughts and emotions, fleeting and changing from moment to moment, of those with whom they were keeping company? Such persons, if not "mind-readers," are at least mind-feelers. They instinctively feel whether those to whom they speak believe what is said or reject it, whether the right or the wrong thing has been spoken, whether enough or too much. They have tact. Now some such fine power of mental perception is indispensable to the public speaker. He must feel, through some subtle interpretation of facial signs, what is the inward, unspoken response of the hearer to his appeals. He must have tact,—which means *touch.* And something more. To his nice perceptiveness add the spirit of love; and tact becomes complete mental and emotional *contact.*

What, then, is oratory? It is animated, whole-hearted talking to people; somewhat louder than in the parlor or the street, but in the same tones and with the same emphasis as

any conversation in which, interested yourself, you are bent on interesting others and carrying your point.

Do you wish to take a short cut to self-destruction as a preacher? You have only to fall into the habit of playing the orator. It is peculiarly the danger of young speakers; be cause they are most given to an affected, unchildlike manner.

> "The old man clogs our earliest years,
> And simple childhood comes the last."

Remember the suggestiveness of the name by which the theory of preaching is called: *homiletes*, a companion; *homileo*, to converse with (used, e.g., in such New Testament passages as Luke xxiv. 14, 15; Acts xx. 11; Acts xxiv. 26). The etymology of the word *sermon* is also significant: *sermo*, a talk. Your audience, likewise, is not, like that of many speakers, simply an audience: it is a congregation (literally *a gathered flock*). And yet young preachers, even when not specially lacking in earnestness and ability, are prone to confound rhetorical power with rhetorical display,—two things so different as to be mutually exclusive. You may have either, but not both: discriminate, and make your choice.

In conversation we find ourselves every now and then calling the name of the person with whom we are talking. Why? That we may get close to him in mind and feeling. The public speaker is not allowed to take this liberty; but it is well that he should sometimes feel like taking it. He should have the same spirit, only more elevated and intense, in speaking to his friends in the audience, as when a few moments afterward he takes them by the hand and calls their names.

One sign of the better recognition in our day of this true method of preaching is the change in architecture by which the pulpit has been brought down nearer to the pews. When the intervening space shall be still further reduced, when there shall no longer be an aisle immediately in front of the pulpit,

when the amphitheater shall be recognized as the best general model for an audience-room,—the preacher will be able still more perfectly to put himself into easy and effective speaking relations with the people. Bishop Marvin said that it seemed to him that he had "wasted sufficient nerve-force in overcoming the distance between the preacher and the pew to have awakened a thousand sinners."

Bear with me. I must insist yet a little longer on personal, direct, and conversational preaching.

Make it a point to individualize your congregation. In the preparation of the sermon think of this man and that. Still more, in the act of preaching, direct your words to individuals, not to an impersonal mass. "And Philip opened his mouth, and beginning from this scripture, preached unto *him* Jesus" (Acts viii. 35). Let the sermon, if written, read, not like an essay, but like a letter. Thus it may be said of you, as it was not uncommon for President Finney's hearers to say of him: "It doesn't seem like preaching; it seems as if he had taken me alone and was conversing with me face to face."

I was once associated with a magnificently endowed preacher. There could hardly be a more delightful converser. With the utmost ease and naturalness, he would adapt himself to any company: he was positively charming to children, and with equal facility held the attention of the most mature and thoughtful. There was a graceful grandeur, a beautiful leonine majesty about his whole appearance and bearing that I have never seen equaled. In a short speech he seldom failed to capture his audience. But when he entered the pulpit, lo, the "orator"! His pleasantness, his naturalness, his talking power all were laid aside; and the congregation had the opportunity of listening to a grand, though somewhat mechanical, declamation. He used to deplore the ineffectiveness of his ministry; but seemed unaware that one cause was this persistent transformation of himself into some ideal Bascom that had fascinated his youthful fancy. It was this type of

pulpit discourse that Spurgeon had in mind when he said, "I hate oratory."

Now it is by no means certain that you are at one with me in these convictions. For many young men whom I hear preach do not seem to have adopted a conversational basis of delivery. You have a lingering notion, it may be, that so simple a style would not afford scope for your power to sway an audience. Many notable examples might be cited to dispel this illusion: two names, not unfamiliar to you, ought to be sufficient,—Matthew Simpson, James A. Duncan. Indeed, the views here advanced are in substantial agreement with the whole consensus of oratorical opinion on this point—at least, so far as known to me. One of the most impassioned orators of Virginia, who has stood as a master before all manner of assemblies, in the quietness and solemnity of the house of God, and amid the wildest excitements of forensic and political debate, said to me: "I should like to give you my best conception of eloquence. It is suggestive thought and a conversational style of speech." Dr. Behrends, in his "Philosophy of Preaching," forcibly expresses the opinion that "sound, sensible talk, when it is dashed with wholesome passion, will break out into the most genuine eloquence and pathos." "See especially," says Richard Baxter, in "The Reformed Pastor," "that there be no affectation, but that you speak as familiarly to them as you would do if you were talking to any of them personally. The want of a familiar tone and expression is a great fault in most of our deliveries, and that which we should be very careful to mend. When a man hath a reading or declaiming tone, like a school-boy saying his lesson or repeating an oration, few are moved with anything that he says."

3. **Upon the Object.**

The preacher may be quite awake to his subject and audience, and but dimly conscious of his object. The time has come; he must preach. He cannot endure the misery of standing before the people nonplussed, or empty-minded, or

cold-hearted. Accordingly he makes due preparation, gives his mind in the pulpit to the subject and the audience, and succeeds perhaps in interesting both himself and others. He enjoys the occasion, and so do they; somewhat as an entertaining lecture is enjoyed, or a bright conversation between congenial minds. All go away pleased. Has the preacher made it his object to please his auditory, like a paid lecturer or a play-actor? Not unless he be utterly unworthy of his vocation. But neither has he made anything else his object, in the proper and full sense of the word. Somewhere in the background of consciousness has been a shadowy, half-formed purpose to do good, but too feeble to be effectual. He would have been surprised if a soul had broken down in penitence at the close of the sermon, or had warmly expressed gratitude for the truth that had cleared away his doubts and difficulties and wrought in him the determination to live a holier life.

It has been said that speakers may be divided into three classes: those you cannot listen to, those you can listen to, and those you cannot help listening to. A happy classification, yielding good suggestions. Make your congregation *hearers*. Have something to tell, and *make* them listen, by all gentleness and suasion and vivacity and earnestness. What can we expect to accomplish by tiring or mystifying or disgusting the people that have come to hear us? But what then? After they have listened and have been pleased, and could not help it, what then? What object has shared, as chief claimant, with subject and audience, your whole available mental energy in the preparation and delivery of the sermon? "Let every one of us please his neighbor *for that which is good*, unto *edifying*."

Much is said about subjects of preaching. In ministers' meetings they are invariably called for; and among the people texts and subjects are talked of. But with the preacher himself the first question should be, What is my object? Not, What am I preaching *on?* but, What am I preaching *for?* The subject is only a means to the object, the end. Do not

lose the preacher in the sermonizer, the end in the means. Do not be satisfied to escape failure, to deliver a passable or even a pleasing sermon; in other words, to parade the streets for a certain length of time, in a genteel uniform, with a well-polished musket, instead of making an actual fight, determined on victory. "When you preach," said a child to her father, "you seem to be preaching *about* something." That was good: the preacher had a theme. But it would have been still better could she have said, "You seem to be preaching *for* something."

The hearers of Dr. Nathaniel J. Burton would doubtless have said that he uniformly preached "about something," and that he did it with remarkable freshness and beauty of thought. But he himself has said: "It has been the sin of my life that I have not always taken aim. I have been a lover of subjects. If I had loved men more and loved subjects only as God's instruments of good to men, it would have been better, and I should have more to show for all my labor under the sun." Many men in the midst of their ministry are making the same mistake, with only a half-consciousness of it.

Devotion to your object will influence the choice of subjects. You will endeavor to select not simply such as interest the audience or yourself, but such as are adapted to the specific purpose of each particular sermon. The text of Wesley's sermon to a cultivated audience on a certain occasion was the words, "Ye serpents, ye generation of vipers, how can ye escape the damnation of hell?" And when one of his hearers said, "Sir, such a sermon would have been suitable in Billingsgate; but it was highly improper here," the serene reply was, "If I had been in Billingsgate, my text should have been, 'Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world!'" Can you imagine an apostolic man saying to himself, "I think, somehow, I could make a sermon on that text; I think it would be easy and agreeable to preach on that subject"? In the midst of a revival you know just what you

intend to accomplish by every sermon and every exhortation: why should there be less definiteness of aim on ordinary occasions?

A lawyer at the bar often fails to gain his case, but he never fails through not knowing what the case is that he is trying to gain. He is bent on securing one thing only, the "verdict." A physician often administers the wrong medicine, but he knows at least what he wishes his medicine to accomplish. So with the general and the movements he directs on the battle-field: should he be defeated, it will not be because of ordering men he knows not where, to do he knows not what. Shall we, unto whom are intrusted the priceless treasure of the Gospel of Christ and the cause of human salvation, do the chief part of our work aimlessly, and expect God to give success? It is not His law. The apostle Paul wrote many things in his epistles, some of them hard to understand, and with many parenthetical passages; but read any of his writings or addresses, and say whether you can imagine him composing for the sake of composing, or speaking merely in order to occupy an appointed hour. "I therefore so run, as not uncertainly; so fight I, as not beating the air." The same is true of any thoroughly earnest preacher, both in his Christian life as a whole, and in that small but typical part of it which is spent in the pulpit. He will be intent upon accomplishing the end of his preaching. Said Rowland Hill: "They say I do not stick to my subject; but, thank God, I always stick to my object, which is the winning of your souls and bringing you to the Cross of Jesus Christ."

And now just a word concerning the speaker's exertion of will-power upon an audience with reference to his object. I hardly know what to think of "thought-transference." Whether there be minds that can will their ideas into certain other minds, independently of the ordinary means of communication, let scientific observation decide. But the power of a single will, when all astir with energy, to influence others through

the ordinary means of communication is an unquestionable fact. Just as intellect may stimulate intellect, or sensibility enkindle sensibility, or conscience awaken conscience, so may will move will. Give the same arguments and appeals, with the same intellectual and emotional capacity, to two men, one of whom is feeble and the other strong and unyielding in will-power. Then let these two men come before any person or assemblage of persons, for the purpose of pressing them to some practical decision. Which of the two is the more likely to succeed?

It is a power, like all others, that may be abused. Revivalists sometimes abuse it. They overbear the wills of the more easily influenced, and force them to acts of self-committal for which they are unprepared. Nevertheless we may all learn a useful lesson from such excesses. Use rightly what some overuse. In preaching bring all your will-power to bear steadily and expectantly upon the people. Say within yourself, "You shall, you *shall* receive this message of God." Such determination will deliver itself as a subtle and intense human influence upon the souls before you. Men are conquered by *love* and *will*.

Read Part I. of McIlvaine's "Elocution."

LECTURE XXXI

EXTEMPORANEOUS PREACHING—IN THE ACT

THE question, What is extemporaneous preaching? is more easily asked than answered. Undoubtedly much that goes by that name is simply so called. In the preface to his volume of "Sermons" Bishop Marvin says: "They were properly extemporaneous, only the analysis having been made beforehand, and that without the use of the pen; for I have never made even the briefest notes for twenty-five years past, except in a very few instances, when accuracy of quotation was necessary. But while it is strictly true that these sermons have been preached, they do not appear in the book with verbal precision. Some of them have been used frequently in the course of several years, but never repeated word for word; yet I suppose those who have heard them will see that the substance of them is preserved, and, to a considerable extent, the phraseology as well." Now the sermon that is preached from "only an analysis made beforehand" might be called "properly extemporaneous" on its first delivery. But when this production has come to be delivered over and over, almost the same in subject-matter and phraseology, the best that can be said of these repetitions is that they are *im*properly extemporaneous. In them the memoriter element is overwhelmingly preponderant.

What, then, is extemporaneous speaking? In the full sense of the word, it is equivalent to impromptu speaking,—that,

namely, in which every thought and every expression is invented on the occasion. What is premeditated speaking? In the full sense of the word, that in which every thought and every expression has been prepared beforehand. Between these extremes we find, in actual preaching, the fusion, in every conceivable proportion, of the two elements of precomposed and offhand speech; the problem being to combine the strength, perspicuity, and truthfulness of the one with the fire and freedom of the other.

The usual statement of the extemporaneous speaker is that he prepares the thoughts, but not the language,—knows what he shall say, but not how he shall say it. Has this man, then, learned to think without the aid of words? or to change his language without changing the thought of which it is the embodiment? The real meaning must be either that he knows the most that he is going to say, but not all (the main matters, not the minutiæ), or that he has thought out everything in language, but holds himself at liberty to present it more or less differently to his audience. In the first case there is more of the extemporaneous element in his discourse than he claims; in the second case there is less. In neither case can he be said to know beforehand all that he is going to say.

Perhaps a better statement would be that the typical extemporaneous speaking is that in which the plan of discourse is thought out and fairly developed beforehand, but, in the act of delivery, is further developed, and freely modified, renovated, or departed from.

The extemporary method makes a higher demand than any of the other methods on the preacher's powers, both physical and mental,—steadily requiring that body and mind be kept always in the best possible condition; and, as might be expected, the results are correspondingly great. It utilizes the whole personality of the speaker as no other method can. "I sometimes think," says Dr. James W. Alexander, "I never acted out my inner man in a sermon. The nearest approach

has been extempore." But it would be useless to occupy your time with arguments in favor of this mode of preaching. Its preëminence is universally conceded; and the question need not be reopened. Dr. Robert South's conviction that "the extemporizing faculty is never more out of its element than in the pulpit" would not so much as stir a ripple on the surface of homiletic thought in the present day.

Still it by no means follows that this is the best method in every case,—that on no other method is preaching that deserves the name possible. Democracy is the ideal form of government, but not the most suitable for all peoples. In like manner, the highest form of his art is not possible to every man. But it is unquestionably incumbent on every preacher to test the matter thoroughly, and make sure that the extemporaneous method is not the best for him, before adopting any other. If he be sufficiently in earnest to do this, the result will generally be a decision in its favor.

Neither have I anything additional to say on the subject of preparation for the pulpit. I suppose the preacher, having already prepared himself in some way for extemporaneous speech, to be standing before the congregation. What now? Can any instruction or hints be given that may prove serviceable in the singular and trying position into which he is come? I would venture to offer him these suggestions:

1. *Be content with your present speaking self, however it may limp and stumble.* No time now to attempt the extraordinary, in thought or expression. No time to be fastidious. No time for distrust of spontaneous ideas and words. The battle is joined: no polishing or testing of weapons now, save in actual conflict. You are not at leisure; not in the study. There sit the expectant congregation; and here are you standing before them, *you*, such as God made you and such as you have helped to make yourself; and in your already attained and habitual manner of speech must you now be willing to talk to the people. Dare, then, to be your simple self.

In other words, we are not to check, but, on the contrary, to encourage spontaneity. Without it there is no fluency and no eloquence. Some preachers remind us of the characterization of Cæsar Augustus in Roman history: "With him every action was the result of premeditation; nothing was spontaneous; he even wrote down what he intended saying to his wife; and his ideal of life appeared to be to avoid making a mistake." A strangely inadequate and delusive ideal for any man; but for an extemporaneous speaker, fatal. Infinitely better is that of Augustine: Love, and do what you will.

(1) As to voice. A speaker who is feeling his way into a subject, with more or less agitation, will not utter his words with the full, firm, and assured enunciation of the declaimer. Let him not imagine that it would be better to do so. The modest and subdued tones, the deliberation (not slowness) and momentary hesitation, which express his present mental action and emotional state, are not only the best he is now capable of, but, it may be, absolutely the best. Are they not all the more truly oratorical for not suggesting the prepared oration? Their lack of loud promise and bold assertion, their simple, natural modesty, will win the hearer's favorable attention. He will listen well through such an introduction, even though the sense of hearing should be somewhat strained. So true is this that some memoriter speakers practise a little voluntary hesitation, or even a sort of half-stammer, as an artifice, in the beginning of a speech.

(2) As to language. Of course you might improve your sentences—at least from a literary point of view—if more time were available. But that is out of the question. What is your spontaneous diction, when interested in a subject of conversation with a congenial friend? Do not seek to transcend it now. Had you lived more faithfully, it would have been better; if you live so in the future, it will improve; but you must use it now unhesitatingly, such as it is. Indeed, here too is an advantage: your conversational language will be

more eloquent—that is to say, the *better for its purpose*—than the most perfect literary style that your pen could command.

Never lose sight of the difference between the study and the pulpit, between writing and speaking. The poet Whittier said: "I hope that the labor spent on my poems is not apparent. If it were, I doubt if anybody would or could read them." But he was mistaken. It does not hinder our enjoyment of a poem to know that it was written and rewritten over and over, that the author's judgment and taste were almost impossible to satisfy, that hours of intense imaginative thought were spent in "running down the sole word that would exactly serve." But such a spirit carried into extemporaneous speech would be disastrous. We are told that Whittier never spoke in the "meeting" which he so regularly attended; and it is not surprising. The extemporaneous speaker, when face to face with his audience, must lay aside the exacting habits of verbal accuracy which belong to the study.

(3) As to knowledge and thought. Leave novelty and profundity to those who are capable of them, or suppose themselves to be. Tell what you know. Give such ideas as you have, not such as you have a hint of. The stock will be poor enough, no doubt, both in quantity and in quality; but the effort to deliver extempore to others what is not familiarly your own will but check the fluency and steal away the fire of your utterances.

2. Still there must be the exercise of *discrimination between relevant and irrelevant thoughts.* The incompetent or the imperfectly prepared speaker is disposed to welcome almost any idea whatever that is suggested by his theme. Now, so instinctively and irrepressibly does the mind act, under the law of association, that it is never really idle. The speaker must be nearly paralyzed with embarrassment if the ideas of any intelligible sentence he may get hold of do not bring up some associated idea. Hence interminable talks. Hence it is no remarkable feat to speak, after a fashion, without the least

premeditation, on any tolerably familiar theme. But the orator has a definite aim. He must persuade people—are you tired of hearing it?—to some act or course of action. And for this a mere casual association of ideas interlinking themselves in all directions is not the fit instrument. There must be logical sequence and convergence of thought. Certain lines of approach to the hearer's motives must be chosen; and whatever is unsuitable to movement in this direction—whatever is not needed as explanation, argument, illustration, application, by the theme under discussion—must be excluded.

3. But *irrelevancy is better than silence.* Have you lost your way in the discourse, forgotten your plan,—instead of "what comes next," nothing but darkness ahead? Take advantage of the thoughts that do arise. Repeat the sentence last uttered, if need be, and follow its suggestions. In all probability you will soon recover the straight path, if not just where you left it, at a somewhat more advanced point.

So much for emergencies; the occurrence of which, however, faithful preparation and general right-mindedness will render less and less frequent.

4. *Will to utter the thoughts, and let the words come of themselves.* Is there doubt of your ability to do this? Verily it is a marvelous achievement,—just as all thought is, and all speech; but one which everybody accomplishes every day, without the least suspicion that he is doing some great thing. In ordinary conversation do you deliberately pick and choose words, and fix your mind directly on them? Do they not just appear, under some impulse of the rational will, and crystallize into sentences,—declarative, interrogative, and others,—subject, predicate, modifiers, connectives, phrases, clauses, antecedents, relatives, all taking their proper places with electric swiftness and force?

This mental action is analogous to a large class of physical motions. The child must slowly and toilsomely learn to walk, to talk, to read, to write,—consciously directing each move-

ment of the limbs, the lips, the fingers, the eyes. The man wills to join a friend on the opposite side of the street,—somewhat as a fish wishes to be elsewhere in the pool,—and forthwith ten thousand coördinated nerve-fibers and muscle-fibers, of whose very existence probably he knows nothing, are set astir, and he is grasping the hand of his friend. I am writing on a paper pad. Does this mean that I am giving attention to each of the numberless changes of direction taken by my pencil? It means very little more than that I bid my fingers write, and am obeyed. I lay down the pencil and talk to a visitor. By consciously and voluntarily using lips, tongue, and larynx in certain ways? Though it was so once, and would be so now if I were trying to pronounce the words of a difficult and unfamiliar language, yet it is not so now in the case of my native tongue. I choose to utter a sentence, and it is done.

Similar is the action of the mind in verbal invention. When a language has once been learned, and by daily and hourly use has grown thoroughly familiar,—a part of one's mental life,—it is ready to perform its function, with extremely little conscious stimulus and direction. And herein lies the possibility of powerful impromptu speech: the language, being spontaneous, claims almost none of the psychical energy. To spend this energy on language is to throw it away. Worse than that, such a misdirection of energy will interfere positively with the right action of the mind, and thus defeat its own object; somewhat as a pedestrian is sure to walk awkwardly and crookedly by looking at his feet instead of keeping his eyes fixed on the place to which he is going.

If the pertinent expression should not come of itself, utilize the best that does offer. If none that seems at all appropriate should be at command, then indeed you may have to divide your energy and weaken your delivery in order to go word-hunting. But I must repeat, the chosen and uniform attitude of the extemporaneous speaker is one that leaves room for spontaneity in the exercise of the gift of words. He thinks

his subject, and persistently wills its utterance rather than the manner of its utterance.

5. *Let your soul be open and impressible to the presence of the congregation.* Can any one speak with as much inventiveness and vivacity to an uninterested as to an interested audience? Possibly; for a certain class of speakers seem equally able to talk on, whether listened to or not. But no one with aught of the orator's spirit can. If he think so, he mistakes, and is on the way to deprive himself of an indispensable source of power. The waiting and wishing faces before him furnish a stimulus to thought, and a condition for flashes of insight and for fiery appeal, that nothing can substitute.

I knew a very young preacher who, after practising extemporaneous speaking in private till he had acquired some little facility in it, said to himself: "Now if I can ever reach the point where I can speak as well before a congregation as alone, I shall be satisfied." It was like much of the wisdom of honest inexperience,—ignorance and error. He soon found that in talking to people, as contradistinguished from meditating aloud or declaiming, he was not only a giver, but a constant receiver. With all his feebleness and blundering, in the hour and act of real speech there would come to him, as it were, another human self; and his words, like a conversation, were the utterance of both.

Cardinal Newman said that in preaching he never saw his congregation. It is not to be wondered at. A logical and deeply religious thinker, a sweet-voiced, meditative reader, he was not, in any proper sense of the word, a speaker. I confess, however, to have been somewhat surprised to find that M. Bautain, in his "Art of Extempore Speaking," advises the speaker against looking at individuals as such, or even into the faces of the congregation as a congregation. "For the greatest possible avoidance of distractions," he says, "I will recommend a thing which I have always found successful,—that is, not to contemplate the individuals who compose the audience,

and thus not to establish a special understanding with any of them. . . . As for myself, I carefully avoid all ocular contact with no matter whom, and I restrict myself to a contemplation of the audience as a whole,—keeping my looks above the level of the heads. Thus I see all, and distinguish nobody, so that the entire attention of my mind remains fastened upon my plan and my ideas." Now this, it seems to me, would be excellent advice for the speaker if he were—not a *speaker*. The thinker in his study, preparing to preach, may well wish to see nobody; but it is because he is ready as yet to speak to nobody. The thinker transformed into the preacher in the pulpit should look at people just as the converser does,—not "above the level of the heads," but into their eyes. And not simply for what he thus gives; but also for what he gets, that he may have the more to give withal. It is not desirable, as we have already learned, that "the entire attention of his mind should remain fastened upon his plan and his ideas." A goodly portion of it should be given to his audience.

The experience of an English preacher who, after spending fourteen years as a sermon-reader, adopted the extemporaneous method is much more consonant with my own than is that of M. Bautain:

"November 16.—I begin to feel the good effect of attending to what is passing in the minds of the congregation. The speaker is aroused by seeing or feeling that the minds of his hearers are in contact with his own mind. This is a stimulus to thought and expression of which I knew nothing when I read my sermons. . . .

"July 5.—To look the congregation in the face is often both a stimulus to the speaker and a guide to him in the treatment of his subject. It tells him whether he is understood, and whether he should drop, or continue to dwell a little longer on, what he is speaking about. . . .

"November 8.—I felt something to-day of the hearts and minds of the people I was addressing. I was conscious that

their thought and feeling were aroused. I seemed to myself to be giving expression to their thought and feeling. This *rapport* between the speaker and his hearers is necessary. Their thoughts and feelings are partly to be read in their faces and partly to be divined. To keep one's self in sympathy in this way with one's hearers is utterly to repudiate the pestilential idea of oratorical display. It is the substitution of the thought of one's audience for the thought of one's self" (Zincke's "Duty and Discipline of Extemporary Preaching").

These seem to me to be words of gold to whoever would learn the art of public speech.

Have in mind, then, not only people, but *persons*, in the preparation of the sermon; and hold them very closely in mind and sympathy, through the eyes, in its delivery.

6. We have also learned that the speaker's object lays claim to still another share of his attention. So I will venture to say further, *Press right on, without precipitance and without paltering or self-gratulation, toward your object.* "Take another!" was the reply of Napier to an elated young officer who insisted on informing him, in the midst of a battle, that a standard had been taken. A speech, like a battle, is an *action*. The preacher who pauses in the midst of his sermon for compliments or congratulations, either from himself or from others, is missing his opportunity. He must be looking ahead. He must "take another" standard, and still another; he must press forward steadily and self-forgetfully to the final onset and victory.

> "Look up, not down;
> Look forward, not back;
> Look out, not in;
> And lend a hand."

The effect of this purposeful energy upon speech is twofold.

First, it prompts the rejection of irrelevant ideas. Needless exposition and illustration, speculative fancies, and such like impertinences will entice the earnest and determined preacher

in vain. So, likewise, will humorous or witty ideas, except under certain restrictions. The preacher, for example, who is always ready to follow a solemn and impressive truth with some trivial or diverting remark is not bent on accomplishing the legitimate object of the sermon.

Coleridge, in his "Table Talk," though he admits that "reading" is not "preaching in the proper sense of the word," says that as for himself he prefers it: "For I never yet heard more than one preacher without book who did not forget his argument in ten minutes' time, and fall into vague and unprofitable declamation, and generally very coarse declamation, too. These preachers never progress; they eddy round and round. Sterility of mind follows their ministry." Now I am sure that extemporaneous preaching has greatly increased in extent and improved in quality since Coleridge's day; but it cannot be said that the "unprofitable declamation" and irrelevancy of which he complained have become antiquated. Concerning some of us, alas! it must still be said, "They eddy round and round. Sterility of mind follows their ministry." And one great reason is the lack of earnestness. Heart and will have not been set on the attainment of our end. Will chooses the shortest distance between the starting-point and the goal: it is fancy, indifference, weakness that "eddy round and round."

Secondly, this spirit of determination will rouse the powers of thought and sensibility, and avail itself of their best resources of speech. Purpose is inventive; the will innervates the intellect; where there is a will there is a way. "If therefore thine eye be single, thy whole body shall be full of light." If you have set your heart on persuading a dear friend to some line of action,—if this be the paramount and consuming purpose,—your mind will not long remain barren of arguments and appeals. A noble-minded woman said: "I never could sing a note till I had to put my hand on the cradle and rock my own babes." We are told that deaf-mutes have been

known to speak under pressure of painful anxiety for the safety of those whom they love. The strong and sudden effort to call some loved one out of danger, or to summon others to his help, broke the spell of lifelong silence and lent a momentary voice to the lips of the dumb. Do you *mean* your preaching? do you believe in God? do you believe in the infinite evil and the infinite peril of sin, in the divine mercy, in the Gospel as the sole authoritative and gracious revelation of God's fatherly love and redeeming power, in the limitless possibilities of sonship to God and Christlikeness of character? Do you really love men? Do you know something of what Paul must have meant, Apostle to the Gentiles though he was, in that great passionate word which we hardly dare interpret: "I could wish that I myself were anathema from Christ for my brethren's sake, my kinsmen according to the flesh"? Then your lips will be unsealed, and words of power will dwell upon them, such as only this pressing forward to the supreme object of Christian preaching can call forth.

7. *There is great effectiveness in reserved force.* Whatever Wesley would have taught the Billingsgate people, he learned a lesson on one occasion from them. Passing near the market, accompanied by a friend, and seeing two viragoes in a furious quarrel, he was disposed to stop and listen. "Pray, sir, let us go; I cannot stand it," said his friend. "Stay, Sammy," was the reply; "stay, and let us learn how to preach." In like manner, we are constantly sent by elocutionists to angry persons, to little children, to beggars, in whom untaught nature is supposed to hold perfect sway, that we may learn the art of eloquence. The advice is good, but needs to be supplemented. The whine of the beggar is sometimes overdone; the pleadings of the child are often wearisome rather than winsome, and his cry not infrequently tends to scatter his audience; the wild vociferation and profuse gestures of the termagant are more likely to call forth the "Pray, let us go," than the "Stay and learn." The oratorical fault in these cases is lack of self-con-

trol; and one way in which it defeats the object in view is through preventing all accumulation of force, all reserved power. The full-blown passion is flung at your feet—and is despised. Self-restraint would have intensified it, and through concealment so wrought upon your imagination as to have made it a subtle, penetrating contagion instead of a harmless explosion. Before restrained passion we feel ourselves to be in the presence of an unknown and incalculable force. So repression is often the most powerful expression. No one knew this better than the man who was nevertheless willing to learn from two irate fishwomen; hence his advice to preachers, never to scream. The two advices must be put side by side: they scream in Billingsgate.

We are not touched with pity toward the man in bereavement who makes no lamentation for the very good reason that he feels no poignant grief. We do pity one who tells it all, in cries and tears and sorrowful words, with no effort at self-restraint. But look on the pale face and quivering frame of the broken-hearted sufferer who nevertheless schools his lips to calmness of speech; and your heart is crushed with sympathetic sorrow. When the soul of Israel's great king was overwhelmed with agony by the terrible fate of Absalom, he cried aloud, as the manner of his nation was; but his grief was the more pathetic because he would fain hide it from the people, and "went up to the chamber over the gate," and covered his face, while the wail of anguish broke from his lips. "And the people got them by stealth that day into the city, as people being ashamed steal away when they flee in battle."

Violent alternations of feeling are to the speaker a waste of power which self-control would have used and *kept*. A flood of loud and excited words is likely to lower the tone and intensity of emotion; self-control heightens it.

The historian of "Our Own Times," after assigning to the Quaker statesman, John Bright, a foremost place among the orators of England, mentions "his superb self-restraint" as the

peculiarity of his style that would first strike the listener's attention. "The orator at his most powerful passages appeared as if he were rather keeping in his strength than taxing it with effort. His voice was for the most part calm and measured; he hardly ever indulged in much gesticulation. He never, under the pressure of whatever emotion, shouted or stormed. The fire of his eloquence was a white heat, intense, consuming, but never sparkling or sputtering."

Of Frederick Robertson's preaching we are told: "So entirely was his heart in his words that he lost sight of everything but his subject. His self-consciousness vanished. But though he was carried away by his subject, he was sufficiently lord over his own excitement to prevent any loud or unseemly demonstration of it. He had the eloquence of the man who at the very point of being mastered masters himself—apparently cool while he is at white heat—so as to make the audience glow with the fire and at the same time respect the self-possessed power of the orator,—the man being felt as greater than the man's feelings."

Of Austin Phelps, who was no less winning and masterful in the pulpit than in the lecture-room, an appreciative critic has said: "He seemed to be eaten up by his theme. . . . Yet his self-possession was perfect. Who ever heard him declaim, or denounce, or do a noisy thing in the pulpit? . . . The fire burned through, that was all. One felt his emotion more because of what he so evidently restrained than because of what he expressed. It was feeling in leash that sprang out from the sensitive face, the modulated accent, the quivering nerve."

With such masters one may well "stay a moment" and "learn how to preach."

8. *Know when to quit.* The extemporaneous speaker is under peculiar temptation to prolixity. The sermon-reader or reciter knows before he begins what time the delivery of the address will require; but not so with "preaching in the true

sense of the word." Here the preacher does not know beforehand whereunto the discourse will grow: and through fear at the outset lest he should not have enough to say (especially if he be but half prepared), and fear toward the close lest he should not have made his points perfectly clear; through the mere natural enjoyment of free speech, and the unconsciousness of duration with which it is accompanied; through digressions, needless repetitions, verbiage; through feeble, diluted conclusions,—there occurs the tedious harangue instead of the strong and effective sermon.

Why feel under necessity, in the act of preaching, to use everything that we have prepared? Just as, on the one hand, we stand ready to introduce unpremeditated thought, so, on the other, let us not hesitate to omit this or that, as occasion may seem to require. The omitted idea will not be wasted. Some opportunity for utilizing it will soon appear; perhaps the same evening, perhaps the next Sunday, perhaps at the next prayer-meeting. But even if it should be certain to pass entirely out of mind and never return, to use it now, no matter whether it promise to hinder or to advance our purpose, would be poor economy. A wise parent will not force his children to eat unnecessary food for the sake of avoiding waste.

No invariable time limit can be fixed. For one reason, because, as a matter of fact, time is measured psychologically rather than physically. All hours are of the same length to the clock, but not to the mind. Said a minister who had been told that he had preached just fifteen minutes, "I am glad of it; I don't like to be tedious." "Ah, but you were tedious," was the blunt reply.

I do not know a better general rule on this subject than the one already given,—that the sermon should last from thirty to forty minutes, with a strong preference for the shorter time. Learn, then, to condense; learn the selective processes; do not be so unwise as to weary those whom you would edify. Not that you should adopt what would seem to be the ideal

of some: "Twenty minutes in length, and no depth at all." But know when to quit.

9. *Remember whom you are speaking for, and abandon yourself to Him.* Extemporaneous speaking is usually preceded by some mental suffering. This suffering, indeed, is of all degrees of intensity, from the mere uneasiness of intellectual and moral tension to feelings of actual distress. It is related of John Angell James that, when asked how he intended to speak at a great missionary meeting which he had been appointed to address, he answered: "The difference is just this: if I speak extempore, I shall be miserable till it is over; whereas if I read, I shall be miserable afterward." There could hardly be a stronger commendation of extemporary speech as compared with reading. Cherish the comfortable feeling that you have the sermon in your pocket, and the preaching power, you may be quite sure, will not be forthcoming with the manuscript. Far better the cry of Moses, "Who am I?" answered by the divine assurance, "I will be with thee" (Ex. iii. 11, 12). It is well to feel the burden. It is well also to get rid of it; but not simply when the preaching is over. As you stand up to preach, cast your burden of anxiety on the Lord, and He will sustain you.

If speaking for your own reputation, you cannot do this. If speaking to please others, you may look to them for strength. But if you are speaking for God, expect to speak *from* Him. If you can say, "Even as we have been approved of God to be intrusted with the Gospel, so we speak, not as pleasing men, but God, who proveth our hearts," the shackles of doubt and fear will fall away, and you shall have a peace and power that pass all understanding. Is it too much to say that you are consciously an organ of the divine voice?

Think of a man with such a spirit troubling himself about the critics, serious or flippant, competent or incompetent. He will be too busy trying to do them good.

And prayer is available. Paul claimed it from the church,

notwithstanding his apostolic gifts and revelations, in order that utterance might be given him, that he might open his mouth boldly and declare the mystery of the Gospel. May we not claim it? But whether the church help together in their prayers or not, we may always lift up our own hearts to God, with the assurance that in our infirmities and necessity the power of Christ shall rest upon us.

I have spoken more than once of fellow-feeling with the people; but still more needful is communion with God. I will not say, He is near you. That word is inadequate. He is with you and in you,—the Eternal Reason from whom your light of reason, the "candle of the Lord," is kindled,—the Infinite Mind whose child you are,—the Lord of the soul, who has chosen and ordained you, at the foot of His Cross and with the baptism wherewith He was baptized, to go forth and preach His evangel. His thoughts are in your mind; His Word may abide always in your heart; between Him and your deepest self there is nothing. Hush the voices of the flesh and of the world, that you may hear His Word and give it expression through your lips.

What a host of witnesses could testify to the help that has come to them from the conscious presence of Christ, through prayer, in the ministration of the Gospel. Let one of the worthiest and mightiest speak for all: "Often and often," says Spurgeon to his "Students," "when I have felt hampered both in thought and expression, my secret groaning of heart has brought me relief, and I have enjoyed more than usual liberty."

CONCLUDING LECTURE

THE TONGUE OF FIRE

AND now the time has come for the parting word. We have had much converse together. Concerning the ministration of preaching we have learned something of its human, personal element, and something of its contents and its forms. The preacher himself and the truth as preached have been our subjects of study. But something more. All the while have we been reminded that in neither of these things is the real source of effective preaching. Greater than the preacher is the man; but mightier than either the man or the message is the Infinite Presence and Power. The spoken word is transitory and inert, unless there be in it the voice of the Eternal Word who was made flesh and dwelt among us, and who laid aside the flesh that He might dwell in us even unto the end of the world. To preach Christ is not merely to speak of Him, but to speak as a prophet *from* Him. And I know nothing better for the concluding thought in our course of study than this supreme truth of the Christian ministry.

Is it too much to assert that, even in such preaching as we can do, the Lord of heaven and earth is veritably present with us and putting forth His saving power? At least it is not contrary to what we know in general of the works and ways of God. He is not outside but in His creation; and in it His power is ever going forth. In every event of the natural world

the Scriptures make visible the Creator's hand. "I do set My bow in the cloud"—"Your heavenly Father feedeth them"—"In Him we live, and move, and have our being." Secondary causes are unnoticed; but that which is clearly seen is the one real Cause and Ground of all motion and of all existence, the Eternal Spirit.

Philosophy bears the same testimony. It will listen to no clock-maker theory of the universe. It apprehends the omnipresent and ever-active Power by whom all things exist,—the immanent God. What is force? Our only possible conception of it is *will*. The forces of nature are the manifold expression of one Force, absolute, causative, everywhere present, the Creative Will. Every spire of grass that rises up in its place, every particle of earth and air on which it feeds, every dewdrop that gathers on its surface, bears witness, "Here are the handiwork and the presence of God." Nature is one perpetual miracle, no smallest part of which is self-wrought.

Now shall this truth appear any the less a truth in human life? "*Your heavenly Father* feedeth them. Are ye not of much more value than they?" As children of God we inherit His providence. He appoints our time and place in the world. He knows the way we take. He defends us from evil and gives us our daily bread.

Much more may we expect the power of God to be felt in our spiritual life. As it is more manifest in the plant than in the stone, and in man than in the beast, so its highest manifestation is in that which is highest and best in our nature, in the free spirit made in the Creator's image. If God who created cares for us at all, surely He will not fail to help us in the effort to do His will. If we may be co-workers with Him anywhere, we shall not be left to ourselves in the work of salvation. Is not this the very Gospel which we have received and which we preach,—God with us and in us, as our Father, our Saviour, our Helper? "I dwell in the high and holy place, with him also that is of a contrite and humble spirit"—

"Christ liveth in me"—"But ye were washed, but ye were sanctified, but ye were justified, in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, and in the Spirit of our God." Indeed, what would prayer be to an absent or an unknown Deity?

What, then, is the Christian preacher's special faith and claim? Nothing strange or unbelievable to any one who believes in the living God; but, on the contrary, a faith supported by all we know of that little part of His ways which has been shown in this world. It is,—that the preacher is divinely called to his work; that he lives in personal communion with the Holy Spirit; that, so far as he has become a true preacher, the substance of his doctrine is the very Word of God; and that—not in name nor in figure nor in some mystical and unpractical sense, but as a simple and sublime fact—he may expect the Holy Spirit to be present in the delivery of that Word, and to make it savingly effective.

Beyond the shadow of a doubt, it was this that sustained the hearts of prophets and apostles. This was to them the truest of all knowledge, deep as their deepest life. Without it they would have been dumb. It was the prophet's overmastering consciousness that he was not alone, that Jehovah was speaking through him,—it was this that strangely warmed his heart, that unsealed his lips, that made his forehead "as an adamant harder than flint" against all enemies and opposers. "The hand of the Lord was upon me"—"The Lord showed me, and behold"—"The word of the Lord came to me"—"Thus saith the Lord,"—this was his authority, his confidence, his strength.

Shall we take one of the minor prophets as an example? It was a turbulent and iniquitous time in which Micah the Morasthite, a peasant prophet, arose and said:

"They build up Zion with blood, and Jerusalem with iniquity. The heads thereof judge for reward, and the priests thereof teach for hire, and the prophets thereof divine for money: yet will they lean upon the Lord, and say, Is not the

Lord in the midst of us? no evil shall come upon us. Therefore shall Zion for your sake be plowed as a field, and Jerusalem shall become heaps, and the mountain of the house as the high places of a forest. But in the latter days it shall come to pass, that the mountain of the Lord's house shall be established in the top of the mountains, and it shall be exalted above the hills; and peoples shall flow unto it" (Micah iii. 10–12; iv. 1).

Whence came this word of judgment and of glorious prevision? The prophet himself has told us in a preceding verse: "But I truly am *full of power by the Spirit of the Lord*, and of judgment, and of might, to declare unto Jacob his transgression, and to Israel his sin."

Or, again, amid the prevalent formalism of his day, Micah holds up his lovely and perfect picture of spiritual religion: "He hath showed thee, O man, what is good; and what doth the Lord require of thee, but to do justly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God?" But does Micah offer this as *his* ideal and summation of the law and the prophets? On the contrary, he knows it to have been given to him even more truly than it was given by him to the people. "Hear ye now *what the Lord saith*" is his introduction of this prophetic word.

Still more mightily did the Spirit speak through the Apostles of Jesus. In fact, all His previous manifestations were not to be reckoned in comparison (John vii. 39). So supremely great was this gift of the Spirit that Jesus spoke of it as *the* promise of the Father (Acts i. 4). What more could have been promised them? For truly God Himself is His own best gift. So, while the church waited and prayed together with one accord, the baptism of the Spirit came upon them. Sincerity of purpose was not enough; to have been eye- and ear-witnesses of the Crucifixion and the Resurrection was not enough; three years of companionship with the Incarnate Word, as the chosen depositaries of His doctrine, was not enough. They

must receive the truth by immediate communication from the indwelling Spirit.

When the Lord appeared to the father of the faithful, to make an everlasting covenant with him, His word was not simply such an assurance as "I will reward thee," but "*I am* . . . thy exceeding great *reward*" (Gen. xv. 1). And again, when the covenant was renewed, the promise was,—"To be a God unto thee and to thy seed after thee. . . . And I will be their God" (Gen. xvii. 7, 8). As the ages and dispensations came on the promise was more and more perfectly fulfilled. When God gave His Son to the world, in the Incarnation, He gave Himself as never before. To have Jesus was to have the Father. "As many as received Him, to them gave He the right to become children of God." But after Jesus went away in the flesh, and came again to abide in the Spirit, men could believe on Him and receive Him as they could not have done so long as He walked visibly in their presence, and had not yet given up His life in the sacrifice of the Cross. And now the word of God to Abraham, spoken two thousand years before, at the very beginning of the church's history, the great covenant word, was indeed fulfilled.

Paul was not present at Pentecost; but the heavenly vision came to him later, and he was not disobedient thereto. From that time forth he lived and walked in the Spirit; and hence it could not but have been that his preaching, whatever it may have lacked in human art or eloquence, was in demonstration of the Spirit and of power. Take out this element from his ministry, reduce his preaching to the level of mere naturalism, and there is nothing left that the apostle would have cared to retain. Paul received the Gospel by the revelation in him of the Son of God, that he "might preach Him among the Gentiles" (Gal. i. 16); and he delivered that revealed Word under the inspiration and power of the Spirit.

May the Word of God come to us as it did to them of old time, and so be delivered by living men to our generation?

May we speak, not of ourselves, but as the Spirit gives utterance? If not, I cannot see how we can be, in any proper and scriptural sense, preachers of the Gospel. It is the characteristic trait of the Christian preacher, not that he teaches a certain doctrine,—he could learn that, in some sense, and recite it, from the Scriptures and from books of theology,—but that he speaks in Christ's name immediately from God. Until this is done, there is nothing to the purpose. If the divine voice speak not through us as truly—I do not say, with the same signs and visions, or to make any new revelation of truth—as ever through prophet or apostle, it were better that we keep silent. Preaching is indeed "truth through personality," but it is *by* the Divine Personality. That same Spirit by whom, pleading within us and helping our infirmities, we are enabled to pray, and by whom, revealing the things that not the senses nor the imagination nor reasoning can discover, the eyes of our understanding are enlightened,—shall He not make us "sufficient as ministers of a new covenant"? And when, in all our unworthiness and inability, we stand before the people, will He not be our Inspirer, and communicate unto us and unto them the word of life?

Said Cornelius the centurion to Simon Peter: "Now therefore we are all here present in the sight of God, to hear all things that have been *commanded thee of the Lord*." What would this apostle have had to say but for the vision which had come to him, and the voice of God declaring that the Gentiles were fellow-heirs of the great salvation? A special case, will it be said? True; but the general principle is that no preacher is prepared to stand before his congregation, whether it be for the first or for the thousandth time, till he has had some vision of heavenly truth and has heard the voice of God in his soul. "If *any man* speaketh, speaking as it were oracles of God" (1 Pet. iv. 11).

We are told of a preacher who was asked, "Are you not afraid when you see so many learned and distinguished people

in your congregation?" and whose answer was: "No, I am not; though I know that many are my superiors in general knowledge and in biblical scholarship, yet I am sure that none of them has studied the particular subject of my sermon more diligently than I have." It is a pity he had no better answer. If he were a true Christian preacher he might have said: "I know and feel the Word of God, like fire from heaven in my soul; and I must speak it to the people. No matter how much *knowledge* of any sort they may have, it cannot be useless that they should hear a present and living message from God."

Now to preach with the tongue of fire is not the same thing as to enjoy fluency and eloquence of speech. It is not the same thing as to have liberty. Any man who has the natural ability and complies with the oratorical requirements may speak with fluency and eloquence on any subject. These, too, are gifts of God to be employed in His service. For the preacher, as a speaker, to despise any natural power or acquisition is not faith; it is fanaticism. But natural powers and acquisitions are by no means adequate to Christian preaching. To be satisfied because our ideas have been suffused with emotion, and have flowed forth in genial and unembarrassed expression, is to be unfaithful to that whereunto we are called. It is to take that which is at best a condition and a subordinate good as the infinitely greater end. Moreover, such conditions, though desirable, are not necessary. The tongue may trip and hesitate, the sentences may be involved or meager, the intellectual outlook may be poor; and yet the words may be attended with an indefinable spiritual power. They may bring men to their knees before God, and raise them up in the joyful assurance of pardon and peace. "Follow after love; yet desire earnestly spiritual gifts, but rather that ye may *prophesy*. . . . And so he will fall down on his face and worship God, declaring that God is among you indeed" (1 Cor. xiv. 1, 25).

May we know, then, by any token, that the Spirit of the Lord is with us in the ministration of His Word? We may;

and by such evidence as proves Him to be with us in any other part of our life and work. Not mental vivacity, not fresh and original thought, not the thrill of pathos or of poetry, not scholarly accuracy of knowledge, not readiness and energy of speech; the witness of the Spirit is not in these things. It is in the feeling of filial nearness to God, and of yearning, Christ-like love for men. It is in the sense of divine communion, which makes us know our prayer is heard, which bruises Satan beneath our feet, which makes the things of the kingdom of God very real to our apprehension, which gives to the word spoken "in weakness, and in fear, and in much trembling" the tone of conviction and authority.

Shall I name the conditions for receiving this enduement of Christian and ministerial power?

1. *A sincere and holy life.* The preacher may bring constant reproach upon his Lord by self-indulgence, by covetousness, by ambition, by frivolity, in his daily conduct; and yet may speak with freedom and eloquence in the pulpit. One of the most pleasing pulpit speakers I have ever known proved utterly corrupt in character. But no man can live an unfaithful life and receive the baptism of the Holy Spirit from Sunday to Sunday.

Will souls be saved under an unholy ministry? It may be. An idle hand might write down a word of truth—say, some verse of Scripture—and cast it out thoughtlessly on the street; and some passer-by might find in it the word of salvation. But what does this prove against real preaching? Here is Christ's institution for the evangelizing of the world. And if a man be called to preach at all, he must be called to preach, not according to some worldly or ecclesiastical or merely personal conception of his office, but in the way that Christ has ordained,—not in word only, but in the Holy Spirit. But if we would have this Spirit in our preaching, we must have it in our life. Read the pastoral Epistles, or indeed any of the Epistles, and say whether, according to the wisdom given to

Paul and his fellow-apostles, a spiritual mind and a righteous life are not an indispensable condition of ministerial success. To walk with Jesus, in the freedom of sonship to God; to beat down the carnal desires of the flesh, so as not to follow or be led by them; to put away all jealousy and fretfulness and evil-speaking; to seek no place of honor or profit or ease in the church; to be all aglow with love and zeal,—in this way of holiness, and in no other, shall we be endowed with true ministering power.

2. *Faithful preparation to preach, in the use of all our natural powers.* Do what you can, trusting and working; for this too is God's law. Indolence is unholy presumption. Why should it be incumbent upon us to study and to speak at all, if it be not required that we do these things faithfully and well? "Whereunto I labor also," says the Apostle to the Gentiles, "striving according to His working, which worketh in me mightily." Human power alone, though exerted to the utmost, is insufficient, and in its very nature unadapted, to achieve the result; but God has been pleased to ordain it as an earthly vessel to hold and convey the heavenly treasure.

It is one of Richard Cecil's wise observations: "I have been cured of expecting the Holy Spirit's influence without due preparation on our part, by observing how men preach who take up that error. . . . One errs who says, 'I will preach a reputable sermon'; and another who says, 'I will leave all to the assistance of the Holy Spirit,' while he has neglected a diligent preparation."

3. *The prayer of faith.* Habitual prayer? Yes; and specific prayer, and supplication. The first disciples needed it, though the promise of the Spirit had been given to them audibly and articulately, even from the lips of Jesus (Acts i. 4). The Son of God—with wonder and awe do we read the record—poured out strong cries and tears to the Father, who heard Him always. From His fasting and temptation in the wilderness "Jesus returned in the power of the Spirit into Galilee.

. . . And He taught in their synagogues, being glorified of all." At His baptism He was praying when the Holy Spirit descended and abode upon Him. Before choosing the Twelve out of the whole company of disciples Jesus spent the night, from evening to morning, in prayer to God. Just before quitting Galilee for the last time, and starting on His way to Jerusalem, there to be offered up,—the shadow of the Cross falling dark and dreadful upon His soul,—"*as He was praying*, the fashion of His countenance was altered, and His raiment became white and dazzling." It was as if He were even now to ascend to the heavenly places. And there came a voice "from the excellent glory, This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased." But this glorification was not for heaven; it was for earth. It was the preparation given Him of the Father for His last painful conflicts with His enemies, for His last words of divine consolation and hope to His disciples, for Gethsemane and Calvary.

Can we do our work without prayer? Have we thought to walk the path of holiness and power, and never ascend those serene and awful heights of face-to-face communion with God? It cannot be. It is thence and thither that the pathway leads. There can be no substitute for whole-hearted and absorbing prayer. Not that God is unwilling to give the Holy Spirit to them that ask Him. How much more parental love in Him than He has put into the heart of any earthly father or mother! But we must ask *indeed*, else are we incapable of receiving. It must be our dominant desire to find God, to know Christ, to be made the willing and obedient instruments of the Spirit's power.

There are many things to which you could not attain. You will probably never become such an orator as John the Golden-mouthed, nor such a thinker as Joseph Butler, nor such a Bible scholar as Franz Delitzsch, nor such an originator of timely and fruitful forms of Christian work as George Williams or William Booth, nor such a missionary explorer as Livingstone, nor such a translator of the Scriptures as Van Dyck of Beirut.

Their gifts and opportunities, with the attendant responsibility, are not yours. You have your own; and the time is coming when you will be convinced that they were great enough. But you may come as near to God, and abide as faithfully and lovingly in His presence, as could any of these gifted and elect spirits. You may receive the Word as directly from the Father of lights; and the same all-powerful Spirit will attend its utterance.

Peculiarities of temperament and of endowment will not be abolished. Each man's preaching will not become like every other man's. Rather the contrary. The higher the development of organs, the more distinct and perfect their differentiation. Every series of living things, from the plant to the man, exemplifies this principle of the wondrous and beautiful economy of the world. So must it be with the exaltation and enrichment of our natural powers by the Spirit of life. It was of a New Testament, not of the Old Testament, church that the statement was made: "Now there are diversities of gifts, but the same Spirit. And there are diversities of administration, and the same Lord." There will be no loss of individuality: there will be the gain of renewal and revivification, the touch of the live coal from the temple altar.

The indwelling of the Holy Spirit will solve the question of success in your life-work. Success! A much-abused term, and yet standing for the most momentous of life's realities. Does it mean to number thousands of professions of faith under our ministry? or to present some neglected and unrealized truth, showing it on all sides and in every possible manner, till finally it becomes a real possession, operative and effectual in the Christian community? or to break the power of worldliness and unbelief in the church, to reclaim the wandering, to be an able minister to the holiest and the most enlightened souls, to make the church more and more a living church abounding in good works? Does it mean to be stoned at Lystra, to win Dionysius the Areopagite and a few others at

Athens, or to stay a year and a half and found a church in Corinth? Does it mean to return with Wesley, baffled and disappointed, from America and from Scotland, or to see "much people added unto the Lord" in England and Ireland? Does it mean to labor six years in a missionary field and make but a single convert, as Judson did in Burma, or to win such an epitaph as that of Geddie on the island of Aneityum: "When he landed here in 1848 there were no Christians; and when he left in 1872 there were no heathens"? Does it mean to plow on the rock, or to reap the plentiful grain of the river-bottom? Any and all of these things, but in principle none of them. It is to be *in Christ.* It is to be a worker together with God. His purpose will be accomplished. The word of His Son, who is the faithful and true Witness, shall find its fulfilment. Are we in the line of the divine movement? Then "our labor is not in vain *in the Lord.*" Can the everlasting God, the Maker of heaven and earth, fail? Neither can those who live in His Spirit and do His will. They are the very instruments of God, in His hand, wielded by His almighty power in the doing of His own work in the world. Failure is excluded.

Your ministry may be very brief. As in the case of John the Baptist, or George Herbert, or David Brainerd, or Thomas Walsh, or McCheyne, or Summerfield, a few months or years may tell the story. It will probably be longer. I hope it may extend through half a century. But no matter. Learn to measure time intensively rather than extensively. Estimate life, not by the number of its years, but by the nobleness of its purpose. Better one day's flight of the eagle than all the sightless crawling of the earthworm. Better the record of Stephen than that of Methuselah. Let your ministry be intense, deep-hearted, *Christian;* let it thrill with holy and daring enthusiasm. Let it be a "ministration of the Spirit"; and whether it be long or short, it will "exceed in glory."

O how greatly is such a ministry needed! There are

millions of souls in our land, after all these ages of Christian institutions, who never hear the Gospel. There are other millions who hear it only to neglect the great salvation, or to limp feebly and unfaithfully in the path of life. Every Christian preacher has felt more painfully than words can express how hard it is to reach men savingly with the truth. The intellect may be interested and convinced, and the secret springs of desire may be touched; but the man himself, in his hardness and impenitent heart, may still resist. Only the voice of God in the Gospel can break the terrible charm of sin, and create the will to follow Jesus. Powerless will be our preaching if there be not heard in it, through all its errors and defects, that Voice, that Word, that Spirit, which is the power of God unto salvation.

Be strong and of good courage. The future is bright and full of promise. There will be many interesting incidents in the life upon which you are entering, many delightful associations, many deep experiences. You will be the recipients of great kindness and confidence from your people. The English-speaking race to which you belong is foremost not only in the art of government, but also in the evangelizing of the world. The age in which it has pleased Eternal Wisdom that you should appear is an age of transcendent opportunity. Through discovery and invention, through interchange of ideas and the wide diffusion of the spirit of humanity, the people of the earth are gathering closer and closer together. The current history of mankind is read at our breakfast-tables, day by day, and forms a part of our daily interest and thought. The ends of the world are at our doors. Dear brethren, it is good to live such a life of opportunity and help; to be in spirit as in fact a brother to men; to go in and out among them preaching the eternal law of God and the good tidings of peace by Jesus Christ. But the best of all is that God Himself will be in you, and will set your words aflame with the fire of His own unutterable love.

Let us pray together: "Now the God of peace who brought again from the dead the great Shepherd of the sheep, with the blood of the everlasting covenant, even our Lord Jesus, make you perfect in every good thing to do His will, working in you that which is well pleasing in His sight, through Jesus Christ; to whom be glory for ever and ever. Amen."

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